FRED MITCHELL'S WAR STORY

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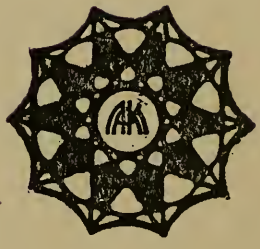
FRED MITCHELL'S
WAR STORY



THE AUTHOR

FRED MITCHELL'S WAR STORY

THREE YEARS IN THE WAR ZONE

BY

FREDERICK MITCHELL

ILLLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
1918

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No. 1.

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO

THE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN
OF FRANCE

Who have suffered untold agonies at the hands
of the so-called German Kulturists and
trust that it may be the means of
bringing a little hope and joy
into their hearts through
the restoration of
their homes.

PREFACE

My chief object in bringing out this volume of my experiences during the early part of the war has been to convey to American readers a true idea of what non-combatants in the invaded country, as well as close to the battle lines, were compelled to undergo.

There has also been a wish on my part that this book may help me in bringing some slight measure of relief to many little orphans, most of whose parents I once knew, and to older but just as helpless sufferers.

I vouch for the truth of everything I relate. It will be observed that these pages contain very little that is based on hearsay evidence. Nearly everything in them is the result of personal observation, purchased at a heavy cost in the way of danger and hardship.

My happiness will be great if I can help a little to bring about a true realization of the menace which the German Empire, as at present constituted, is to the rest of humanity, and how absolutely necessary it is that its crushing power should be for ever broken.

FRED MITCHELL.

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CHAPTER I

THE BREAKING OF THE STORM

For twelve years I made my home in one of the garden spots of France, perhaps the fairest country, taking all in all, of those that men live in and are ready to die for.

I was to see it invaded. The pleasant, kind-hearted people among whom I dwelt were to be changed, well-nigh overnight, into a terrified, hunted, harassed mob of starvelings, subject to the ill-will of brutal hordes. Villages whose steeples were in our purview were to be shattered into fire-blackened heaps. The glorious old trees of the roadside and the forest, some of which had witnessed invasions of the forebears of the modern Hun, were to lie prostrate or stand up, gaunt and leafless, struck by the lightning made of man.

The country is a rolling one with great patches of forest where deer and boar still roam and in which great hunts follow baying hounds to the sound of the hunting horn. Every hill reveals a wonderful landscape. Some valleys are occupied by racing tracks while in others the fertile ground is divided into fields where intensive cultivation brings plenteous crops.

Here and there the eye follows the course of the Oise, bordered by ancient willows and other century-old trees and winding its silvery course towards the Seine. Lakes there are also, on the banks of which are built villas and summer residences, while small streams pass through fields and pastures in which cattle fatten in the rich herbage. The roads are such as may be found in France only, extending out of sight between hedgerows or in a setting of straight poplars.

Such is my impression of the land in which I made my home, when my thoughts go back to the days before the war. But at present my idea of it is still confused. It is like a persistent and evil dream from which I cannot awaken. The rolling land is there, torn up by iron that was never made into ploughshares. Some of the forest survives, decimated by shells and axes that have sought material for the beams that roof over the trenches. My village escaped destruction, but a mile or two to the northward brings one into devastation. And the young men are gone. Those who return will never be young again for they have been aged by suffering. Slowly old men and women, with those too young to fight, are grubbing among ruins for things they hid or for a few poor heirlooms that may still be of use, under crumbled stone and brick and plaster.

I must here explain in a few words my selection of a residence in this district. It was the racing centre

of France. To it came visitors from all parts of the world. Perhaps as many as a thousand thoroughbreds were in training within ten or fifteen miles of my home. And I am a jockey by profession, an occupation which my intense love of animals had caused me to supplement with the breeding and rearing of the best strains of dogs.

I may here state that my profession had some bearing on the events I am about to relate. This occurred in specific instances which I shall mention further on, but my long training helped me a great deal. It may be admitted that a man who is to obtain continuous success as a rider must cultivate the habit of instant decision and he must face danger with a certain coolness. I do not imply that he must be braver than other men, for nothing is farther from my thoughts, but men who follow hazardous callings necessarily grow more callous than others in the presence of danger, whether at sea or on land. It was the fact of my being somewhat accustomed to being in tight places which permitted me to carry out many of the undertakings that were thrust upon me.

Lest readers unfamiliar with the risks of my occupation may think I am drawing a long bow I feel compelled to say that it is one looked upon with disfavour by the insurance companies. Both my arms and legs have been broken at some time or other, with a scattering of fractures of more insignificant bones

such as ribs and collar-bones. I was perhaps favoured in being a rather small man, having seldom weighed as much as a hundred pounds. Owing to this the average Hun could hardly deem me a very dangerous individual. This may have had its disadvantages since at times he probably reckoned me among the more helpless inhabitants and by this time we all know his invincible courage when faced by women and children. Bravery exists in all mankind and the German possesses his share of it. Alone among modern peoples, however, he has mingled it with the most arrant brutality, with unvarying arrogance towards inferiors and with a well-nigh indecent obsequiousness in the presence of his superiors. Alone he also possesses the distinction of deeming women and children, as well as the aged, as an element which, in conquered lands, calls for his best efforts in the way of spreading terror. I wish it were possible even to hint at a tithe of the infamies he perpetrated among them. Throughout this book I shall be compelled at every turn to moderate my language. It is a necessity and yet one I must at times deplore. It is true that the tales I could unfold would not be fit for the ears of ladies or of the young, but at the same time it must be remembered that those outrages were inflicted upon women, of the highest and lowest, and upon innocent children such as yours and mine, such as you love from the innermost depths of your hearts.

Soldiers of France and England have been found, crucified, but I may not tell the greater horrors their mothers and sisters were often compelled to undergo. Like other savage tribes, the Huns know many ways of causing their victims to cry out in agony for death to still their agonies and end their shame.

So there I was, living with my wife and two children in a place which, at this distance from home, I can think of only as a sort of paradise on earth. While a jockey and working in the midst of an element in which the din of the betting-ring was ever present I had, from my earliest experience as a rider, made it an unalterable rule never to bet. Leading the quiet and moderate life compelled by constant training I had managed to save a fair share of all my earnings and reached a position of comfort such as is assured by a modest competence. My boy and girl went to school and spoke French like the natives, so that we had to insist on the use of English in the house, that they might not forget the language of their parents. The kennels were a constant source of pleasure to us. Nearly ninety inmates spoke to us in every variety of canine language, from the great deep voices of huge wolfhounds to the sharp yelpings of the tiniest toy-terriers. The many puppies were always a delight.

One day came the news of the murder of Austrian royalties by men who, although Austrian subjects,

were to be deemed Serbians for the better furtherance of plans made by sinister crowned heads that had been getting ready. Any pretext would have served their purpose and this was seized upon eagerly. After this came the dull rumbling which, we are told, commonly portends an earthquake or cyclonic disturbances. It was something intangible that floated in the air like poison gas.

On the peaceful little villages of northern France these rumours had not the slightest effect. It was as if the sun had been shining too brightly to allow little fleecy clouds to cast any shadows on them. The season's holiday preparations were well under way; the racing meets occurred at stated intervals; the usual happy life was pulsing strongly over a world at peace. But a very few of us began to feel that something was impending. As for many years previously the country swarmed with Germans occupying all sorts of positions, following the race meets, sending out betting information, or appearing to belong to those leisure classes ever seeking for excitement. The largest factory in Gouvieux, the village where I lived, was owned by Germans and manufactured flags. Most of the workmen were of their own people.

A few days only before the declaration of the war, those of us who felt that something was in the wind sought out a few of those people. "Ach! A war! Never! Peace had lasted for over forty years be-

tween Germany and France! Impossible that it should be broken! Were not the two countries ever growing nearer?" To this sort of thing we listened, very nearly until the end, and I may say that to a few those words brought comfort. I have no doubt that some of these Germans ignored the fact that war was bound to come, yet I firmly believe that still more were absolutely and utterly forewarned.

A stable-boy of mine chanced to be a German. A willing and obliging fellow he proved and an absolute genius at language. It was only afterwards that we recollected that, on his arrival among us, he scarcely knew a word of French or English and that, strangely enough, he appeared in the course of a month to become a master of both languages. Three days before the war he came and told me he was going to England, and we parted on the friendliest terms. When I next met him, as the reader will see, he had blossomed into something very different from the knight of the curry-comb.

The fourth or fifth of July found us in Gouvieux, where I expected to remain until some time after the racing season, intending to exhibit important entries in some of the dog-shows. The value of some of this stock of mine was considerable. For an all-white French bulldog that had never been beaten in the show-ring I judged it proper to refuse an offer of four thousand dollars. Like many other of my possessions

at that time he had to be sacrificed later on. As the weather grew warm a part of my household decided to spend a few weeks at Ostend, in Belgium, while my son Freddie and I remained with the dogs.

Getting dogs in their best form for exhibition represents a great deal of work. In order to make arrangements to show about twenty-five of my animals I had to go to Paris and took my boy with me. There a brother-in-law of mine spoke very seriously about the possibility of war and asked me if I did not feel some anxiety on account of the members of my family who were in Belgium. Naturally enough I began to feel quite concerned over the matter. My wife had been invited to spend some time in Brussels, and it was there that the first and blackest war-clouds seemed to be gathering. The mobilization of German troops, it appeared, was under way.

As soon as I could go back to Chantilly I took a bicycle and rode over to Gouvieux as fast as I could. I stopped at the telegraph office and wired to my wife, urging her immediate return and telling her to allow nothing to delay her. As soon as I had sent the message I sought out some of my friends and apprised them of the rumours of war between France and Germany, adding that Russia and Austria and Great Britain might also be added to the turmoil. My friends heard my news incredulously, or at any rate with the greatest surprise. Many of them utterly re-

fused to believe in such a possibility and had any number of cogent reasons for their assertions. Returning to Paris on the following day, my brother-in-law again asked me anxiously if I had telegraphed to my wife. After I had reassured him he asked me to come over to his hotel to have a talk over the latest news he had obtained. When we reached the place he declared that he felt quite sure that war would be declared exceedingly soon, perhaps in less than twenty-four hours. He felt so certain of his information that I was compelled to realize the gravity of the situation and decided to return home immediately.

When I reached my house I found, to my great relief, that my family had already started, but the telegram gave me no information in regard to the time of their arrival. Riding over to Chantilly I made inquiries at the railway station, asking how long the journey was from Brussels to this place. I was somewhat taken aback when they informed me that it would be impossible for my wife to arrive before the following day at six o'clock in the evening. If she should unfortunately miss that train, they told me, another twenty-four hours' delay must occur. At this time, I may state, war had not yet been declared, and I was compelled to go to Paris at once, on business.

I had hardly stepped off the train before I heard the newsboys crying out: "War Declared!!" Men and women lifted their hands up towards the skies. I

heard one or two tremendous oaths. For the most part the people looked staggered, stupefied, mesmerized. The calamity seemed to have caught them utterly unprepared. Till the last moment there had been hope. There had been the impression that this was another one of those recurring cries of "Wolf!" that would again turn out to be based on vague fears and idle rumours. The menace had been there, for several days, but the reality stunned them. Nor was it through lack of courage that they first bent their heads under the blow. Old men had told me of the days, forty years before, when the populace had shrieked "On to Berlin." This time there were no such boastful words. One felt that the first blast once passed would give way to a tremendous, sturdy, well-nigh silent push, in which every man would seek to do his duty and every woman would seek to uphold him. The great heart of France was throbbing faster, I daresay, but already it was pulsing with the blood of men who have proved their heroism, over and over again.

I hurriedly attended to my business, taking but a few minutes for my lunch, and rushed off home again. When I reached my station I announced the news but already it had spread like wildfire. Most of the people, however, ignored that the war had been officially and irrevocably declared. The alarm was great among the townspeople, while in the smaller vil-

lages all looked excited and upset. They surrounded me, knowing that I was an Englishman, and eagerly inquired whether my country would join theirs. I shouted to them that England had given her word and would fight to the last man. So great was their enthusiasm and relief that it was with some difficulty that I escaped their most friendly mobbing.

Later on, in the evening, I went over to Chantilly to await the arrival of the train which, I hoped, would bring my wife and daughter back. My joy was intense when the cars clattered in and I saw them, for my anxiety had been great indeed. At home she told me all that she had undergone in her efforts to get away. There had been a very Babel of eager, anxious, bewildered people all striving to return to their respective countries—many Germans included. When she managed to reach the frontier, where all luggage had to be examined, the controller warned her that if she remained long enough to have her trunks looked over she would certainly lose her train. Very kindly he offered to look after them and have them forwarded to Paris, where he would send the keys and where she could claim her belongings. She was glad to avail herself of his good-natured offer in order to avoid being delayed.

Her concern was great in regard to her cousin and his family in Brussels. The outlook for them was threatening. He had an exceedingly nice home there

and a flourishing business. The daughter was sixteen and his son one year older.

Every one in Brussels had commented on the fact that a great many English sailors were there on permission, enjoying a holiday from their ships anchored in Belgian ports. My wife had seen them there but two days before the declaration of war.

For a very long time we never heard about her cousin. It was at least a year afterwards that we learned of his adventures. When the Germans came he had been interned with all other British subjects. He soon managed however to inspire some confidence on the part of the invaders and at last was allowed to move about, under rigid restrictions. By degrees the family worked its way towards the frontier, where the father fell in with a band of smugglers. His son and he, alternately, accompanied them on some of their trips across. They also worked in the fields, cutting cabbages and turnips and helping prepare such merchandise for the markets. The father was finally allowed to drive a horse and cart used in transporting the vegetables and other foodstuffs, assisting a farmer to carry his goods and dispose of them in Holland. During all this time the family was in severe straits for lack of food. They were compelled to sleep in the fields, like outcasts, and lived on whatever they could poach and on such vegetables as they could pick up. Gradually they became well known to the guards

No 27

SOCIÉTÉ DES STEEPLE-CHASES DE FRANCE

LICENCE DE JOCKEY

Le Secrétaire général de la Société des Steeple-Chases de France certifie que :

Le Jockey Mitchell Frederick

demeurant à Chantilly (Oise) chez Monsieur Willy Carter

(Né à Litchfield (Angre) 19 Juillet 1879)

est admis à monter dans les courses dont le programme est inséré au BULLETIN DES STEEPLE-CHASES.

Délivrée à Paris, le 4 1909.

1909

CHAMPION ET PALLIÉ — 33. 11 08.

FRED MITCHELL'S STEEPLECHASE JOCKEY LICENCE

at the frontier and the man was allowed to go back and forth, finally also obtaining permission for his son to accompany him. They made a number of trips and at last arranged with some smugglers to see that the horse and cart were returned to the farmer, who had befriended them. They suffered keenly from want for three weeks before they could obtain funds to permit their escape to England. Their experience is related because it was typical of the adventures that befell hosts of people who were caught in the advancing flood and suddenly reduced from affluence to dire poverty.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE TIDAL WAVE

VERY soon the people of the village began to gather about my house, seeking advice. Every able-bodied man had been summoned away to the colours and this sifting out of the strong left a population which, for the greater part, seemed pathetically helpless and dependent on others. Time and again I was eagerly asked whether England would stand by France, her ally, and I kept on repeating my assurances that her word was even better than her bond and that they must share my faith in her.

The storm was not upon us yet, nor did its fury reach us for some weeks. But we all felt that it was moving towards us, irresistibly, like the waters of a dam that has burst, which are sweeping through the valleys, engulfing everything in their path.

To our little village came the news of fighting in Belgium. At first there were hopeful rumours of a tremendous slaughter of the enemy, of magnificent repulses. But such tales, originating Heaven knows where, gave place to the assurance that the Huns were

advancing and progressing daily, shattering what had been deemed impregnable fortresses and spreading terror over the land, methodically, with malice aforethought, plainly showing that rapine and murder and rape were part and parcel of the unchanged force that had been kept in leash during forty years, awaiting "The Day!"

We then heard that the fighting had reached the frontier and was coming nearer. It struck me like a blow to hear in Paris, one afternoon, that the hordes we believed had been held up by the Belgians were swarming through Brussels and advancing against Antwerp. The distance between the Huns and ourselves was lessening hour by hour, and when I reached home again, that day, I found that my wife had heard the news and was making every preparation to leave.

In my paddocks there were eighty-seven dogs, which at a fairly low estimate were worth a hundred thousand dollars, for among them were prize-winners famed all over Europe. They represented the greater part of all I owned and I could not bear to leave them. I felt compelled to tell my wife that she must go without me since I would have to remain and take care of them. But I had not reckoned with a woman's faith and loyalty. She refused to hear of leaving me. Many of our nearest neighbours began to depart and a number of them, hearing of my decision, brought valuable dogs to me and begged me to look after them.

Since the village was empty of serviceable men and utterly unprotected I went to the mayor of the town and offered my assistance, declaring that I would be only too glad to be put to any needed use. My slender weight utterly unfitted me for soldiering and the mayor was greatly pleased to avail himself of my offer. He proposed that I should do police duty, in which I was joined by several gentlemen of the place. For a long time, therefore, we patrolled the various districts at night, each man working every other day from nine to half-past four in the morning.

All the owners and trainers of the surrounding country had received notice that their horses must at once be presented for service in the army. A very large number of valuable animals were taken and of course sacrificed at the very lowest figures. None that I ever heard of hesitated in the performance of this patriotic duty. Away they went, animals that had won the greatest stakes and whose records and breeding were matters of knowledge wherever racing is conducted. While the loss was bravely accepted, many hearts were grieving at the idea of these wonderful animals being sent away to serve as targets for the advancing guns. Men who live very constantly with animals cannot help feeling a personal and friendly interest in them. To many of us it was as if some close relatives had been led off to gasp their lives away on bloody fields. Still, men were offering

all they had for the best interest of the nation, all over France and England, and doing it cheerfully for the sake of right against might.

Closely followed the announcement that in two days no more trains would run from Chantilly to Paris as all bridges and culverts were to be blown up owing to the nearness of the enemy. We felt that we were being cut off from the great city, and I immediately journeyed there to procure all the dog-biscuits I could buy. I was successful in obtaining assurance, at the factory, that they would at once ship all the available supply to the Gare du Nord. I then thought of a most valuable bulldog I had at Pont de Grenelle, close to the Eiffel Tower, and went there for it. Since dogs are forbidden access to street-cars I was compelled to get a taxicab, owing to the great distance. But I had to wait for it a long time and, as I stood in the street, I heard the crashing of guns. Running to the bridge over the Seine we saw that the pieces mounted on the tower were firing at a German aeroplane that was flying above the river. This, I have heard, was the first plane that came over Paris from the enemy's lines. The excitement finally died away and we obtained our cab at last.

As we landed in Chantilly we were surprised to see hundreds of people crowding in and about the station. I wondered what could have happened to bring such an unusual number there. It reminded

one of the affluence on the days of great races. The moment I reached the platform I saw that faces wore expressions of concern and worry greater by far than those ever shown by losers at the tracks. A good many of these people who were acquainted with me came and asked me anxiously if I did not fear for my wife and daughter. Breathlessly they advised me to rush home as fast as I could and bring my folks at once to the station, since the very last train to Paris was expected in a few minutes. Their excited words did not affect me much, however, since I had already decided upon my future movements. For a moment I stopped to look at them. Many were fellow-countrymen of mine and chiefly interested in the racing establishments. Their wives and children were with them. Some showed evidence of hasty dressing. They all bore bags and cases and parcels without number. It was more like a rout, like a fleeing before impending disaster, than like the preparation for an ordinary journey. Such scenes were repeated all over lines extending for hundreds of miles over which anxious men, haggard women and their weeping children seemed to be escaping from a plague.

When I reached my house I found four bicycles resting on the wall outside the door, all packed up and ready for a voyage. As I went in my wife asked me if I would have something to eat before we left. I

asked where we were going and she replied that we were leaving for Paris. When I told her that the last train had gone she answered that it was for this reason that the bicycles had been made ready. I explained again how impossible it was for me to leave, and urged her to go and take the children with her. I simply could not leave all my beautiful dogs to the mercies of the Germans. Mrs. Mitchell asked me if I could not put a lot of biscuits in the paddocks and leave an abundance of water, but I was compelled to tell her that this would not do and again begged her to go. Again, however, she refused to leave without me, preferring to run all risks with me to the alternative of being separated.

Here I may say that it is my firm belief that at the beginning of the war Germany was so eager to get to Paris that she overlooked her greatest opportunity. She already had a small army in France, awaiting the word, and every town and village swarmed with her people, employed in a host of trades and occupations, underbidding the native labour, penetrating into every nook and corner. A vast number of them were spies or, if not regularly employed as such, were ready to give information to the invaders. Many of those who had lived among us returned as soldiers, knowing every bit of the ground. It turned out that this, in a way, proved fortunate for me. No praise can be too great for the Belgians who, hopelessly outnum-

bered at the start, managed to resist so bravely and to gain time. Before the French could come to their help Brussels and Antwerp had fallen, but it was at this time that the French began also to show their wonderful bravery. They were fighting against the most tremendous odds, utterly unprepared against an enemy armed to the teeth, thoroughly provisioned, and possessing the advantage of a first successful and devastating advance. At this time occurred the mistake of which I have just spoken. If the German army already in France had not rushed to Paris, which it already saw in its grasp, but had instead turned about and outflanked the French, a tremendous part of the fighting line of the latter might have been shattered.

Week by week we expected the flood to reach us, but about four of them went by before the first waves came. During this interval we toiled hard indeed. Those who had not already left were preparing for their departure, reluctant to go away before they were actually compelled to do so. Everywhere they were hiding and burying valuables they were unable to take away with them. In the later days some went off so hurriedly that they forgot to inform me that they had placed their dogs in my kennels, and I kept on finding strange animals among my own, till I felt as if I had been in charge of an asylum.

By this time communications were entirely broken

and we began to feel the need of food. I was forced to kill some of my livestock, and particularly the pigs, which we smoked as best we could under the circumstances. This accumulation of food I placed in a great cave that was under the church and which was to shelter many unfortunates during the hard days to come, and undoubtedly to save some lives. This cave had not been used for so many years that not even the priest was aware of its existence. It was only when searching for a place to conceal our things in that I came across it, aided by the recollections of an ancient inhabitant, who pointed out to me a remarkable door, bricked and plastered over, which we finally managed to open. Great pillars stood in it, which could only be dimly seen when the door was open as there were no windows or other openings. It contained nothing but an accumulation of cobwebs that must have been one of the greatest on record, and extended far beyond the church under my own ground.

The priest was an excellent man, greatly loved by most of the villagers. One day when my son and I were anxiously discussing what we should do with the large influx of strange dogs, and how we could possibly feed them in addition to our own large collection, he came out of the church, telling me that he had heard that I intended to remain in Gouvieux. He wanted to know if this was true and was evidently greatly pleased when I confirmed this statement.

I had to go over to the château of a friend, Mr. B——, who had informed me that he was about to leave for Dinart in his automobile. He asked me to be good enough to look after his place a little, explaining that he had left an old caretaker to look after a part of the house, the remainder being in charge of a man and two youths. Mr. B—— had two horses that had been rejected by the government, and on the next day I went over and turned them out in a field. I also explained to the old woman and the men how they should behave when the Germans arrived, since they were expected at any time. On that evening the old lady hurried into my house, explaining that the men had left with bag and baggage. She was terror-stricken at the idea of remaining alone and I had to tell her that I would send my son to stay during the night at the château, until I could make some better arrangement.

On the next day I was compelled to go to Paris, on my bicycle, since there was no other means of travel. I returned on the morrow and was besieged by anxious enquirers for news, who eagerly scanned the few papers I had brought back. The information was not encouraging, and on the next day the village was nearly deserted. Again it seemed as if some terrible epidemic had wiped out most of the people. I went to the Mairie, where I asked the official if there was anything I could do, volunteering to serve him in

any way that might be in my power. After this I rode over to Chantilly, meeting many horses on my way. They were being ridden away to a more southern section of the country, taking journeys of ten or fifteen days—many of these animals had been the pride of France.

In this town I also found everything silent and deserted. I could hardly realize that I was not dreaming. On my way up the main street it seemed ghostly to see all the shops and stables locked up. Now and then some disconsolate-looking individual seemed to be roaming about, aimlessly. Upon my return I called upon an old friend who had charge of an important stable in Gouvieux. We discussed the black prospects that lay before us and I left him. He will again be mentioned in these pages.

By this time all telegraphic and telephone communications had been cut. The fine bridges at Creil, Pontoise, Pressy, Boran and Senlis had been blown up into wreckage. I began making my rounds of various houses. The keys had been left at the mayor's office, and we arranged to bury as many of the valuable contents as we could. It was thought best to put all the silverware and jewellery we could find under about four feet of earth dug up in chickenyards and runs, since these fowl would soon cover up the ground and hide the fact that it had been tampered with. We had some arduous toil over this job, my son and an-

other man helping me. In some of the places, unfortunately, all the feathered inhabitants had disappeared. I brought over some of my own chickens and placed them in those yards, to conceal as well as possible all traces of our work.

On other days I went the rounds of various houses and chateaux in which caretakers had been left in charge. Most of the latter, however, had followed the general example and disappeared. I found that many poor animals had been abandoned, some of them being locked in and unable to come out. Most of them, of course, were starving. It was a bitter sight to see such suffering, through no fault of the owners. Over walls and fences we had to scramble to drop poisoned food that would promptly end this misery. It may easily be conceived that such a duty was painful indeed to one who had always loved animals. It actually made me ill to think of all the splendid creatures that must be destroyed, and to think that fate had made me their executioner. All this, however, was but a very small beginning of the dreadful sights I was soon to have thrust upon me, night and day, during a long period that shall always remain before me like some hideous nightmare that will not pass away.

Rumours of the impending arrival of the Germans were becoming more and more persistent, and I decided to carry all the food I could procure, with all

the beds and bedding I could put my hands on, in the old cave. Into it went also a motley collection of articles of household use, cooking utensils, stoves and every other thing we thought might be needed. I invited most of the remaining inhabitants to come and see our preparations. Some corners I partitioned off for the use of my family, but others constantly made use of the cave, later on, and it was seldom that close to a score did not pass anxious nights there, when the storm finally broke upon us. We had reason indeed to feel worried. Tales of the ferocious brutality of the invaders were coming constantly to our ears, and I must say that they were seldom exaggerated. It would indeed have required powerful imaginations to conceive anything worse than that which really happened, and of which I was destined to behold my share.

I was again called to the mayor's office. He made a demand for all the firearms, ammunition, and weapons of any kind in the possession of the inhabitants. The peremptory orders were that all such material should at once be brought to the Mairie by every person in the Commune, to be put away with all keys to empty dwellings. This last precaution was for the purpose of preventing the soldiers from breaking into such houses as were locked up. They would only have to apply at the mayor's office in order to be able to enter any premises they desired to occupy.

Word was also sent to all the inhabitants, giving rules and advice as to their behaviour. Full instructions were furnished as to how they should act throughout the five villages of our neighbourhood. It is true that our own was saved from destruction, but these measures, loyally and honestly carried out throughout the invaded country, according to the rules of civilized warfare, safeguarded but an infinitesimal proportion of houses from pillage, and of inhabitants from wanton insult and injury.

We were told to store our provisions in the most secret places we could find, since there was no way on earth of obtaining any more. Money was out of the question. With all communications interrupted it could buy nothing. In fact, most of the inhabitants buried their little hoards of silver with their other valuables.

From time to time people who formed a sort of vanguard of the refugees who were soon to pour down on us would clatter through the village in rickety carts, or pedal on with their wheels, or ride nags of all degrees. Strangers to us they were, and on their faces apprehension was stamped, indelibly, and as they passed by they shouted to us that the Boches were getting nearer. Some would stop for a moment's rest and speak of horrors, or swallow a little of the food they had brought with them, hurriedly looking ever

and anon to the northward as if the enemy had been on their heels.

A few little children played before some of the houses, unconscious of danger, their laughter sounding oddly amid the general stillness of people whom the coming peril seemed to impel to speak in low voices. But their mothers would call them back, fearing that they might stray out of their sight and that the baby-killing bayonets would be upon them, a fear but too well justified in numberless instances.

In this way the four weeks I have mentioned went by, day by day and hour by hour, each second bringing the devastating flood nearer. It is no wonder that only the babies laughed, and only the puppies in my kennels could give an impression of the carefree life that had hitherto been ours. Every man and woman able to think looked sombrely at the future. Nor was it altogether fear. It was not the conduct of cowards. Rather was it the indignation of liberty-loving souls against an enslaving horde, and horror of a soldiery whose passage was always a defilement, even when they occasionally neglected to fire a dwelling or loot it from top to bottom. No, I think it may truly be said that it was not fear that moved us, but the awe with which people expect to see something monstrous and unspeakable.

CHAPTER III

THE HUNS ARE ON US

ONE of the most familiar pictures of our boyhood's days represented an annihilating fire sweeping over vast prairies. Before the scorching blast fled hosts of animals. The very ground seemed to thunder beneath the hooves of maddened horses, of buffaloes and of smaller wild things. The very birds, in clouds, winged their flight away from the burning.

A few days before the Huns arrived the same picture was reproducing itself in the panic that drove a bewildered population into our little villages, where they only stopped for an instant if their exhaustion was too great for them to remain on their feet. And ever it must be remembered that it was not cowardice that drove them, but the prospect of utter starvation, of the levelling of their homes to the ground, of the pillage that would leave them well-nigh naked, with never a crust of bread or a drop of milk for the young. Before the sweeping advance of the enemy all means of livelihood vanished in the smoke of the fires methodically kindled in homes without number and in

the disappearance of every animal and even of every fowl upon which the soldiers fell, hungrily and wastefully, slaughtering whatever they could not immediately use and leaving the festering bodies to add their stench to the acrid clouds rising from smouldering homes.

In hundreds came these poor people from all parts of the Northwest of France, and from Belgium. Some of them had gaunt and starving horses drawing carts, or donkeys and mules. Others drove sturdy Belgian dogs attached to their little two-wheeled carts, who pushed into their collars with tongues lolling from their mouths. Folks less well provided wearily pushed wheel-barrows, hand carts and even baby-carriages, piled up high with poor belongings they were seeking to save. Chiefly these destitute people consisted of women and children, though a few youths, up to fourteen or fifteen, and some old men, trudged on with them, bearing loads of all kinds. Now and then a cow would be driven along, often bellowing with fatigue and thirst. Smaller animals, such as rabbits, were being borne along, with fowls and other things that might serve as food. Many of these unfortunates had only left their homes after they had been in flames and were deprived of the most necessary articles. The bareheaded were as numerous as those who possessed some sort of covering. Others were without shoes or wore the scantiest clothing.

Men and women that looked like scarecrows dragged along exhausted children, or bore in their arms poor little babies that were practically starving. A few of the more fortunate infants had been laid in wheelbarrows, among other rescued flotsam of the tidal wave. Indeed it was a pathetic sight. Nor was their arrival in one of our villages a means of recruiting their strength by rest and food. The former of these was out of the question, as long as they had strength to continue their flight, and the villagers themselves had long before their arrival begun to go hungry. These refugees were forced to live upon whatever they could gather by the roadside—turnips or such other vegetables or fruit as they could pick up.

Hardly one of them ever knew whither he was bound. The only thing they knew was that a possibility of safety lay to the southward and the eastward. They were mere objects floating irresponsibly at the behest of an unknown tide and borne along merely by the hope that somewhere, anywhere, they might find means of stilling their hunger and laying down their weary heads. Paris lay before them, they knew, and in its direction they trudged on, trusting that the great city might feed them. Of shelter they found little or none. When night came they would sleep in the fields or at the side of the road.

As the days wore on the people flowing through our place were more and more exhausted and footsore.

Those we questioned had dreadful or pitiful tales of the treatment meted out to them by the invaders, and always they felt that these men were hot in pursuit so that, after a few minutes of rest, they would stagger again to their feet and march on.

Nor must it be thought that these people all represented the poor and lowly or those inured to hardship and strenuous toil. Fortune had played many pranks upon them. With fine shoes falling to pieces a lady might trudge by, as brave as the rest, who had but a week before ridden in her automobile. Some who had employed a retinue of servants grubbed in the fields for overlooked edible roots. Among them were owners of villas and chateaus, people who had known want only by hearsay and had possessed large fortunes and fine estates. At this time they formed a democracy of suffering, a republic of hunger and carking anxiety, to whom the morrow could bring but more pain and starvation which they would have to endure till they reached some place of safety, far over there towards the setting sun.

It may easily be conceived that our few remaining villagers were upset and terrified at these sights and at the constant reports of German outrages. The results of them were there, before their eyes, told by people who had gone through a very hell of suffering and bore its marks. And always there was the tale of those who had been left behind, unable to join

the flight. Cripples and other helpless beings had been burned to death in their homes. Only those able to walk all day and part of the night had escaped. Some had tried but had fallen by the wayside, far from home, unable to take another step, and they had been engulfed.

Among the hosts of poor creatures whose desolate progress we witnessed I recall a woman showing evidence of former ease and refinement. She staggered to our house, bearing two little babies—twins—in her arms, and implored us to give her a little milk for them. Fortunately we had a small supply which my wife let her have. A few dog-discuits had been left on our table and she was delighted to take them for her little ones. I need not say that people accepted such things, and would have taken even much coarser food, with the greatest eagerness. Many of them had travelled as far as 170 kilometres—about 125 miles —walking day and night and practically without a thing to eat. In order to allow this poor woman to rest for a moment I took her babies on my knees. They were far from satisfied as yet and I bethought myself of a bit of bacon rind in a cupboard. I cut it in two and they chewed away at it, ravenously.

My readers, like thousands of other people the world over, may wonder how it was possible for the Germans to occupy so quickly, and to be so unerringly acquainted, with all the districts through which they

passed. But I have already said that before the war they had swarmed all over these places. Hundreds and even thousands of them were ready, in all the quarries and the racing centres, in the champagne districts, in shops and factories. It is not to be wondered at that the poor inhabitants were amazed to see them pouring down on them so soon. They had been ready and fully equipped for a long time. Among the first soldiers to pass through our place I noticed a man who had been working in the German flag-factory in Gouvieux. This was but one case among thousands which accounted for their familiarity with the spots they invaded and their perfect knowledge of roads and even paths. They knew every village and every house as well as the inhabitants themselves and were able to lay hands immediately on all provisions and other things that could serve their purposes. Myriads of places were stripped of the slightest thing of any value, even if they chanced to escape incendiarism. Bare walls only were left, with all contents thrown out of windows and smashed to bits, wantonly.

Finally came an evening I shall always remember. It was about half past eight. The country-side was still, in its peace of a nearly deserted land. My wife left the house in order to go and see an acquaintance who lived perhaps five hundred yards away from us, and spent a short time there. On her return with her friend they noticed a lot of soldiers standing in front

of the mayor's office. It was difficult to distinguish them among the many trees growing in the square in front of the building, and my wife gained the impression that they were English troops. Curious to see them more plainly she went up close to them, whereupon one of the men shouted at her, in German, asking her roughly what she wanted. She naturally did not stop to answer, hurrying directly home with her friend. I saw that she had been badly frightened, as she announced to me that there must be at least five hundred of the Huns on the square.

My first impulse was to disbelieve such news. I told her that she had doubtless been in error, hoping thus to quiet her alarm. But she insisted that she was right and I felt that she could not be mistaken.

We stood out on the doorsill, watching eagerly and wondering what was about to happen. Presently about a hundred passed before us, mounted on bicycles, as we stood and stared at them. It was a sleepless night that we spent, knowing that the flood of invasion had reached us and was pouring on farther. Constantly we expected to hear them pounding at our door. I cannot say that I was afraid but in my heart there was doubt and apprehension on account of my wife and children. They bore themselves bravely, however, and the long night wore on.

On the following morning we were up at break of day, wondering what was in store for us. The bell

suddenly rang and I went to the door, to be met with a revolver covering me and held by an officer. In excellent English he addressed me:

"Oh! Is that you, Mitchell?"

I answered that he was not mistaken and he questioned me again:

"Do you know me?"

"I'm afraid I don't, in those clothes," I replied, realizing that there was something familiar in the man's face.

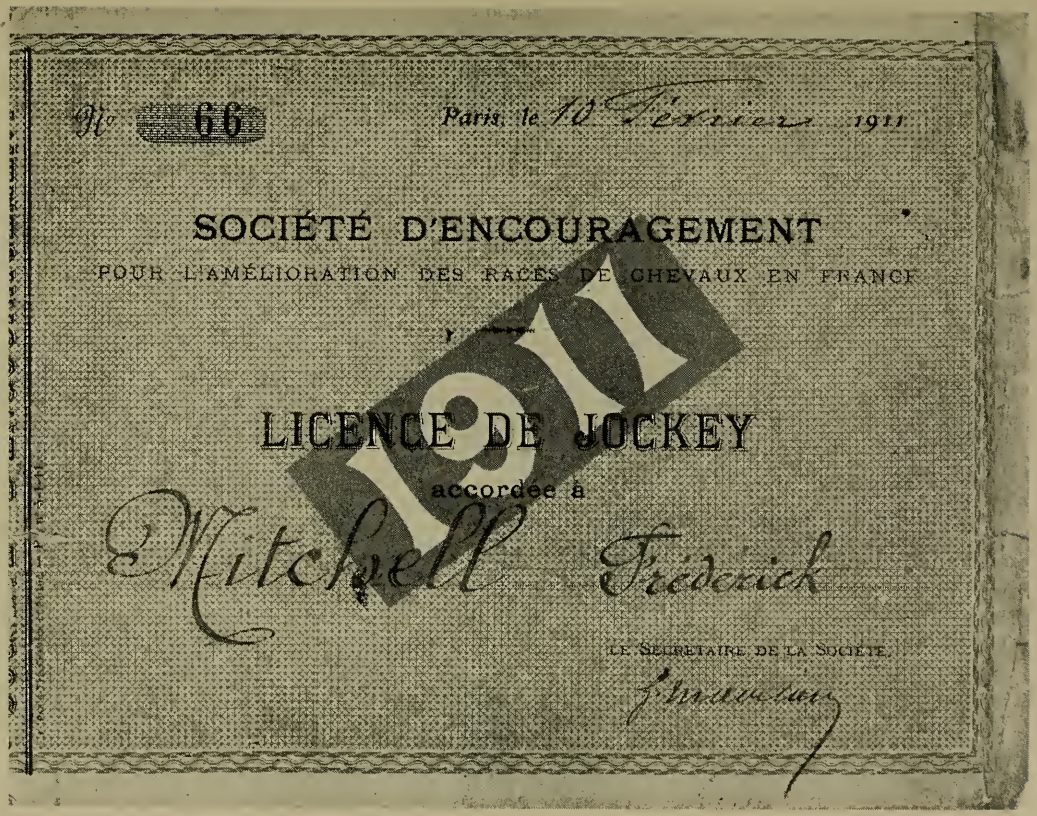
At this he mentioned a couple of race-horses I knew, and suddenly I recognized him perfectly. My surprise was great indeed, for he had been nothing but an ordinary stableman, feeding and grooming horses and at the beck and call of every trainer and jockey. He had been employed in one of the leading racing establishments of France, belonging to the Rothschilds.

He asked me if I had any bread and I was obliged to acknowledge that I had a little. At this time there was but one baker's shop in the village that was open. An old man with a son of fourteen were the only two left in the place. They had sought to do the work for all the remaining inhabitants, but, thus short handed, had been hard put to it to turn out the needed amount. This, naturally, had limited the supply to rather small rations. I told the officer that he could have half my share, and then he asked me what drink-

ables I possessed. I replied that I had a little English beer and a few bottles of stout, with some white and red wine, telling him that he could help himself to it. He ordered one of his men to go down into my cellar and bring out three bottles of stout, which I opened. He ordered me to drink also and was raising his glass to his lips when the soldier urged him to be careful and to make me drink from the glass before he touched it. The colonel, for I discovered that the former cleaner of stables held no less exalted a rank, waved him aside.

"No," he declared. "I know that I can trust Mitchell."

So we naturally drank the stuff, after which the colonel left, his man bearing away stout, beer and wine, with a couple of pounds of bread, and I heard nothing more from them until about midnight. I had decided that it would be best for me not to go to bed, and when I so informed my wife she declared her intention of remaining up with me. I could only tell her that she might do as she wished, but that I felt compelled to remain on the watch to see if I could possibly save or help any one. Chance had brought about this meeting with a man I knew, and who seemed to be fairly well disposed towards me, and I thought my acquaintance with him might help us or some of our friends out of trouble. Hence we kept up our vigil together. I took the time to make a short visit



FRED MITCHELL'S FLAT RACE LICENCE

to the cave under the church, which could be reached from one of my own yards, to see that all was well there.

I recall very clearly what a wonderful night it was, with the moon shining brightly. In its light I could plainly see the clock on the steeple of the church, some 125 yards away.

I had only sat down again a few minutes when my wife, in a low voice, declared that some one was climbing up to the window.

I immediately seized a revolver I had hidden, but my wife implored me to put it away again since we might all be killed if I should use it or even if it was seen in my hand. I concluded that her advice was wise and so I merely looked through the window to see what was going on. Outside my front door, and well above it, there was a signboard. A German soldier was stooping down, and a second one perched upon his back was holding up a third, who was busily engaged in carving something upon the sign. I afterwards found out that it helped protect the house and its inmates from injury.

My acquaintance, the colonel, was entirely familiar with every inch of ground in and about my land and house. While I had been riding he had practically been my valet during much of the time, and he had looked after the horses I used to ride over to various tracks and stables or to the hunts. I had known him

only as the most ordinary stable-hand and was naturally amazed and bewildered at seeing him blossom out so swiftly in resplendent uniform and in high command. His perfect knowledge of his surroundings seemed to be shared by his men. They never took the trouble to ask or hunt for anything they wanted, knowing unerringly where they could lay hands on it. Thus was the enemy ready and utterly familiar with nearly every foot of the land of France and Belgium. He had really been invading these countries and carrying on a form of warfare against them during all these years of peace. They had prepared for every eventuality they could imagine and left nothing to chance. The junkers of Germany, too noble and grand a class to toil at honest work in their own land, in spite of their being a poverty stricken lot as a rule and to whom service in the army is the only occupation worthy of their grandeur, are only too glad to accept menial work in foreign parts as long as they can serve their Kaiser and country by acting as spies with the hope of one day biting the hands that have fed them.

Here I must acknowledge the fact that my German acquaintance acted towards me in a rather kindly manner. I have always sought to maintain pleasant relations with the people who worked for me, and he had never received any but the best usage at my hands. Doubtless he also considered that I would probably be

of some assistance to him. Perforce this turned out to be the case, in a good many instances, and such ill-will as I may bear to him is only directed to the infamous system he helped to uphold.

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING A NEW TRADE

On the following day I heard some men marching by and, looking out, I saw twenty or thirty German soldiers who were passing my house. To my intense surprise they all saluted as they went by the door. This incomprehensible move of theirs disturbed me considerably, and one or two neighbours were in the same frame of mind. The good priest was one of them. We had somehow gained the impression that it must signify trouble of some sort and that the house was doomed. I asked the priest's advice as to what he thought it best to do, since I had others than myself to consider. He thought I ought at once to go over to the mayor's office and explain my predicament. There, however, I was told that it was an excellent sign, the meaning of which was that neither my house nor my people would be molested. At this I was able to breathe again. It cheered us all considerably.

About midday I received a message requesting me to go to one or two places. After I had started to carry out my instructions I met several of these Germans, who halted me. They questioned me carefully

and in excellent English, and I found them eager to know whether I thought that the British had begun to fight. They appeared to be quite firm in the belief, which had been most profound among all Germans, that my countrymen would never join France and fight against their country. They were destined to be surprised, to their sorrow and fury. Of course I pleaded utter ignorance of what was happening, and they believed me all the more readily since no one had been able to procure any papers and we had been for many anxious days without the slightest bit of news. These men looked surly and threatening as they spoke to me, and I must acknowledge that I was somewhat flustered, since I possessed no passport of any kind and I had not the slightest chance of being able to defend myself if they took it into their heads to attack me. I was compelled to tell them where I lived and at once took this occasion of telling them that the colonel had been at my house. I related several incidents, which appeared to afford them some amusement, and they told me they would soon come over to my place. Finally they allowed me to pass on and I hurried away, well pleased that I had been able to satisfy them, and reached my first place of call. From this point my way was along the side of the river, and I arrived in a village where I met more Germans. Some of them were paddling themselves about in small boats and rowing themselves across

the River Oise. As soon as they caught sight of me they ordered me to pull up at once, whereupon I jumped off my bicycle. Their chief anxiety was to know whether it would be possible for them to get something to drink at the *café*. I replied that I could not be sure of it, since I was in no position to know, but that I would see what I could do for them. I went around to the back of the house, which was all locked up, and finally broke a pane of glass in the window and unfastened the latch. To my surprise I found a terrified old lady in the kitchen. She was stone-deaf and had heard nothing of what was going on. I did my best to explain to her what the soldiers wanted, but she was in a dreadful state of mind and sought to put me off, shrieking that her husband would be back in a few minutes. I told her that the men must have some beer and that it would be best to let them have it instead of taking the risk of having them wreck the place. The poor old lady was so panic-stricken that she asked me if I could not serve the beer out to them, whereupon I at once assumed a new function.

The soldiers were served with "canettes," holding about a pint apiece, which they guzzled down enthusiastically. After they had drunk their fill they asked me where I was going and wanted to know why I was not in the army. I had to enter into lengthy explanations in regard to my errands and as to the

reasons of my having escaped military duty. I was naturally obliged to invent some excuses and told them that I had been looking for something to eat. Also I informed them that I had been asked to report at the mayor's office whether there were any uncared-for animals that should be destroyed. On the strength of my tale I was finally allowed to depart and continued my tour of investigation, looking out for dogs and other abandoned creatures. On my way I called at Mr. B.'s house and here, to my surprise, I found Marian, the old caretaker of whom I have spoken. She was sitting on a chair outside the door, weeping bitterly. She was terribly unnerved and upset. She told me that she was too badly frightened to be able to remain any longer, even in the daytime, and as my son Freddie could not possibly stay there day and night, having any amount of other work to do, I persuaded her to feed the animals and then lock up the house and come with me. I promised that my son and I would return with her later, to attend to the horses for the night. Then she could come back and sleep with the others in the old cave. She was overjoyed at this arrangement.

Two days later the old lady found a police dog, which was very sick, and which I doctored up to the best of my ability. On that evening she seemed to be afraid of leaving the house and begged me to let my son come and spend the night there. The idea was

not one that pleased me, since I hated to have the boy all night out of my sight, owing to the unknown dangers that might be surrounding us. Still, in the end I agreed to her request.

At about half past twelve that night Marian heard the dog barking and peered out of the window. She could see German soldiers perched on top of the wall and engaged in climbing up the post which led to the telephone wires, which they immediately destroyed. She awakened my son at once and the lad got dressed, after which the two of them let themselves out through the back door and went across the river, circling around for about a mile and a half till they finally reached my home. But when they got there they had no means of letting themselves in, as they feared to make some disturbance that would arouse suspicion on the part of any stray German passing by. I was alone in the house, all the others being in the cave, and of course never heard them. They made their way around the old church to one of the back gates. Freddie climbed over this and went through one of the kennels, from which he reached the back door. I was taken by surprise when I saw him there. He was quite excited when he told me the predicament they were in, so that it was some time before I discovered that the lady was still standing out there in the dark, shivering with fright, for she had been quite unable to follow the boy over the gate. When we

went out we found that she had fainted through sheer terror. Finally we managed to get her inside and Freddie ran in the house for some water, with which we revived her. In less than a half an hour she was all right again and we took her over to the cave, but not without the greatest difficulty. Once there, however, she naturally obtained the best of care and I returned to the house, where I sat up for the rest of the night.

Two days after this the Colonel came over to my house again and enquired for me. My wife told him that I was in a baker's shop opposite my house, that had been deserted. The keys had been left with me, as the owners had possessed a few chickens and rabbits with a very old horse and had asked me to look after the derelicts. At this time I had become a sort of dry-nurse to more poor abandoned animals than I had ever realized a man could look after. Our supply of biscuits for my dogs had run exceedingly low and I was terribly afraid that I would not be able to obtain sufficient food for them. In this emergency I bethought myself of this old bakery, wondering if I could not make shift to concoct some sort of dog-food there. I found that there was on hand a large amount of material, which we called mullage. It was a sort of coarse meal, containing much of the refuse of the flour-mills, which was usually employed for the purpose of fattening pigs. Necessity, they say, is the

mother of invention, and I went to work to find out whether I could not put it to some other use. In a few days more my dogs would be starving, and I decided to try and make biscuits for them out of this stuff. The ovens were in excellent order and we found that the heat could readily be turned on. Any amount of wood was on hand and, with my boy's help, I began to try my apprentice hand at baking. We had been hard at it for some time and had turned out about sixty biscuits that might have weighed about four to the pound. About eighty or a hundred more were in the ovens, not entirely baked, when the bell rang. I naturally thought that it was my wife or some of the villagers looking for me and answered promptly, being greatly surprised when I found the Colonel standing there and waiting. Four of his men were with him. I had already discovered that he preferred to be well guarded. Several soldiers always moved about with him, and hundreds more were always within summons of the whistle he carried.

At once he began to bombard me with questions. What was I doing in there? What business had I to rummage about that place? I hastily informed him that I had been compelled to adopt a new profession and invited him to enter and see what I was doing. He complied, being closely followed by the others, and manifested his astonishment when he saw the work we were engaged in. The man appeared to

think there was a humorous side to the situation; at any rate he indulged in a little fun-making which appeared to afford him considerable amusement. He joked over my change in occupation and about the many strings I appeared to have to my bow.

"You will have lots to talk about after this war is ended," he told me. "I hope that we will meet again under other circumstances, if only to discuss the art of baking biscuits. You seem to be getting along pretty well."

It must certainly have seemed like a most amusing joke to him, for he kept on repeating: "Think of Fred Mitchell, the celebrated jockey, with a big white apron around him and baking biscuits."

From this he went off into reminiscences, telling me of the wonderful times he had been afforded as a result of information I had given him in regard to the races. He went on:

"You can't imagine how much money you have permitted me to win during the days when I was your stableman. Indeed, you put me on to some mighty good winners. Do you remember the time you told me that Gilder Ray was sure to win at St. Cloud? There was not another man in the stables or elsewhere who had the slightest idea that he had a chance, not even poor old Trainer Brown. I wonder where he is now, and what has become of him? Didn't he go over to Germany to train? It seems to me that he

did. Ah, well, I hope we shall have some more good fellows of his kind."

He stopped for a moment, looking at me and smiling a little.

"I wonder if you will believe me when I tell you that I won over forty thousand francs that day. In all I took in over fifty thousand marks—thirty thousand of it in German money, for I used to place all my bets there. Isn't it amusing to think that all these people here looked upon me as a mere stable-boy?"

He had a good laugh over this, and was perhaps quite entitled to it, for he certainly had fooled us egregiously.

"I wonder what old Alf would think?" he went on, referring to the head stable-lad. "I wish he were here now so that I could tell the 'bee' what he used to say to me. It used always to be the 'Bee' with him, his invariable name for every one. 'Now you "bees" get on with this, hurry up with that! I've told you so a hundred times!' We used to dodge around the corners trying to beat the old chap. I shall never forget one morning when I wanted to get away to the telegraph office. He met me going back to the horse I'd finished grooming and asked me what the deuce I was doing? He little thought I was trying to get out through the back way and out through the wood. But he swallowed some excuse I gave him and I managed to deliver my telegrams and get back again

without being caught. I have no doubt that if he had I would have been kicked out of the yards and discharged at once."

He laughed again and rose.

"Well, we must have some more conversation about those good old days, when I have a little more time."

All this, it may readily be believed, was not quite as amusing to me as it had proved to him, although it was interesting to talk over old times again. But, at any rate, our talk had somewhat increased my confidence. I could see that all this might serve to bring the fellow somewhat closer to me and for this reason I encouraged him to talk. At any moment I might have dire need of him, in case of sudden trouble. This may not seem absolutely fair on my part, but the matter, after all, might be one of life and death for me and mine, and for my friends in the village. I remembered that we were at war, in which everything is supposed to be fair.

His retinue had made themselves perfectly at home, sitting down on the meal-bags or any other conveniences they could find. They laughed to hear about what their colonel had been and remarked how strange it was that our paths had crossed again.

The colonel told me that he could not make out why I always refused to bet, for he knew that this was my invariable rule. He simply couldn't understand it. Time and again he asserted that I would have made a

large fortune in the betting ring. To this I could only reply that wagering was something that had never appealed to me in the slightest degree, and that I preferred to spend all my spare time with my dogs. They were my hobby, second only in importance to my dear ones at home.

Suddenly he asked me whether the biscuits I was baking were fit to eat, to which I answered that I believed they were. Promptly my son Freddie picked one of them up and broke it, beginning to eat it. The Colonel immediately followed suit and appeared to rather like the taste of it. With this he ordered his men to sample them. They obeyed at once and, rather to my surprise, were not satisfied until they had consumed several apiece. It seemed queer to me that they suddenly withdrew into a corner of the place, where they began an earnest conversation in their own language with their colonel. The latter then came back to me and asked me if I could make ready for them about two hundred and fifty of these biscuits, by five o'clock in the evening.

Under other circumstances I might have been rather flattered by this tribute to the perfection of my latest accomplishment, like the housewife who is pleased to see her guests delighted with the results of her culinary efforts. But at this time I must say that my heart sank within me. I could see all manner of gruesome pictures of myself, permanently occupying

the baker's boots, with never a moment for rest or for the many other things I had to attend to. Moreover, I felt nearly overcome to think that my poor dogs, after all, might finally starve as the result of the greed displayed by these Germans. I dared not refuse, of course, for I was utterly at the mercy of these people.

When I asked the Colonel whether he could not spare me a couple of men from his command, to help me out, he answered that he was sorry that it was absolutely impossible. He added, in a low voice, and out of hearing of the others, that it might not be safe. It is fair, I suppose, to think he knew pretty well what sort of people he was commanding, since he plainly showed that they were not to be trusted.

My son and I worked fearfully hard to get the required biscuits ready at the appointed time, with a few more for our dogs. Needless to say, we had not nearly enough to supply them all, in spite of our efforts. At five o'clock six lancers galloped up to the door. One of them dismounted and, summoning me, demanded the biscuits at once, gruffly, and ordered me to have two hundred and fifty or three hundred more ready at nine the next morning.

I sought to tell him that I could not be sure of being able to supply such a number, but he interrupted me, harshly crying that I *must* have them ready. The men slung the sacks in front of their saddles and dashed away again.

After they had disappeared I asked my wife to go over to the mayor's office and explain about those biscuits, asking what I had better do. The secretary stared at her:

"Tell him to go on baking, by all means; we must keep on good terms with the fellows. If Mitchell only knew how much he is doing for us he would work night and day! He may be the means of saving us all! For the love of God tell him to keep on baking those biscuits. Let your son work while he gets a little sleep, but keep at it, resting and working in turns!"

Since we were quite helpless in the matter we could but abide by the secretary's instructions, and, since I realized how important a matter it was, we kept up the work willingly enough. It did one's heart good to see the joy of the villagers when I told them of our experience that evening. There were less than a score of them left, and not an able-bodied man among them, so that it was impossible for me to get any help from them. Two or three of the old men—one of them at least seventy—simply danced for joy at the thought that I might possibly be instrumental in saving the village. The old fellow had some property and valuables he was by no means anxious to lose. All this made me all the more eager to go on with my baking and whatever else I could do that might keep us on good terms with the invaders. The work

was hard, indeed after a time it became a sort of nightmare, for we had to supply the increasing demands of the Boches and to feed a lot of dogs which the recent unwelcome accessions had raised to the number of a hundred and seven. We worked as strenuously as we could to accomplish all this, and it may be imagined that it was no small task. Soon after this came to me dreadful news. The Mairie regretfully informed me that it was absolutely necessary that I should do away with a large number of these animals. It was most important that we should keep on furnishing these biscuits, all the more so because we were not using the real flour, since the Germans seemed to be perfectly satisfied with our dog-food.

Many a time I wondered why the Colonel, or at any rate some of the officers under him, had not asked for biscuits made of the best flour, since there was a large quantity of it in the bakery. I can only suppose that they overlooked it entirely, and we were more than pleased at their silence, or their ignorance.

Thus began a period of dull, stupid, wearisome toil that was never ended, and which I must pass over on my way to other happenings.

CHAPTER V

I BECOME A JACK OF ALL TRADES

AFTER two more days, during which my boy and I worked unceasingly, the Colonel came to me and asked if we could not open the tobacco shop near by. In regard to this I may say that he had his command under better discipline, and allowed fewer outrages, than any other German officer I have heard of. While invading districts in which resistance had been offered the Huns had put everything and nearly every one to fire and sword. Through our place they had come without meeting the slightest obstacles. On the whole line they were conquerors. A few of the more humane officers could afford to treat the populations half decently, especially when, like our own, they consisted of perhaps a score of feeble and crippled people. It was only when they became conscious that they were repulsed that all of their savagery was aroused in our part of France. Their first defeat called for merciless and sanguinary reprisals, carried out as usual upon the defenceless.

The colonel told me that if I could open the shop

it would save him the trouble of having it broken into, and I told him I would try to get into it from the rear.

"Oh, yes," said he, "I remember the way. I have many a time gone out at the back door as the gendarmes were coming in at the front. We used to play billiards there, and a good many exciting games of cards. You see that I know the ropes pretty well, but in my position I don't think I care to go around there. Get to work and see what you can do in the way of getting at this tobacco. I'll wait for you in front. My men are getting impatient and are determined to have it, and I can't be watching them every minute. It will be best for you to get at it for them."

The man knew very well that if his soldiers broke in the place would be looted in a few minutes and that a great deal of the stuff would be wasted. It was good policy on his part to prefer an orderly distribution. I complied at once with his instructions and got over the back door. The proprietor's wife was upstairs, an elderly woman living like the others in constant terror. I persuaded her to come down and open the front door, telling her that it would be smashed in if she hesitated long. Her fright was such that she begged me to stand by her while she served out the tobacco and I assured her that I would.

We got the front door open and four men came in, with the Colonel. They asked for cigars, tobacco, snuff and bottled beer, all of which they paid for.

I was told to instruct this woman that she must under no consideration close the place, and that if she obeyed everything would be paid for.

The poor woman was nearly distracted; she spent her spare moments in trembling and bewailing her fate, having been terribly impressed by all the tales the refugees had told us. At last she realized, however, that there was no immediate danger and that her stock would be paid for. I finally left her much comforted. In spite of her fears she had proved herself an observant woman. Glancing at the Colonel, she whispered that she had certainly seen the man before, adding that this could scarcely be possible and that she must be imagining it. I volunteered no information, however, fearing that the Colonel might not like it. Experience was teaching me constantly that it was best to hold my tongue and be reticent in regard to everything.

On the following morning thirty to forty men crowded in for cigars, cigarettes and tobacco. I hurried there from the bakery, where I was working in scanty garb, owing to the heat of the ovens. To make myself presentable I slipped on an old overcoat and went behind the counter, forthwith graduating as a tobacco salesman. New trades were being forced upon me daily, it seemed to me, and it was no joke. I often wonder now how I managed to keep so many irons in the fire and attend to them all. I had to

wander about the country in the capacity of dog-poisoner and to rush back and attend to the duties of a bartender. At other times I was instructed to carry various messages around, or to ride off on my bicycle on tours of investigation. And ever the bakery awaited me, demanding every other minute of my time. My lot was not an easy one.

On the third day more Germans came into the tobacco shop for supplies, for which they paid a hundred and twenty-five marks that morning. A sergeant who was with them called me aside and told me he wanted to have a word with me. He drew me into a corner of the room and asked:

"Are you not Fred Mitchell, the jockey, and haven't you been riding in Belgium and at Baden-Baden?"

I answered that I was the man, and he surprised me by the extent of his information about me:

"You're one of the luckiest fellows in this country," he told me. "Your coming across the Colonel has made a great difference, I can tell you, and given you a chance to keep a whole skin. He has told us that you were his friend and that you always helped any one you could oblige. A lot of us know what racing is and I hope you'll keep on the right side of our men. They know how well the Colonel is disposed towards you and he has directed them to always ask you for anything they want, knowing that you will get it for them if possible."

This added to my sense of security, though it by no means lessened my heavy responsibilities. On the following day new troops came in, and five hundred bicycles and horses were in our midst. These men who were passing through were engaged in scout duty. Before leaving they crowded into the tobacco shop and cleared the place of everything there was in the way of drinks, cigars, tobacco and cigarettes. Neither did they fail to invade my bakery, which they swept clean of every biscuit I had. My poor dogs, therefore, had to be put on half rations that evening, and it was a small allowance indeed. It meant that I should, after a strenuous day, have to toil all night at my baking. I managed to turn out a new supply, but towards the last of my work I was so utterly exhausted that I practically fell asleep while standing on my feet. Finally I was forced to lie down on the bare boards for an hour or so. When I awoke I was dismayed to find that two hours had gone by. My poor boy was also asleep and I had not the courage to disturb him, so I set to work again to turn out more biscuits.

Shortly after this more German soldiers came through our place and invaded the tobacco shop, loudly demanding a supply of smoking materials. The poor woman despairingly assured them that the place had been swept clean, but one of the fellows gruffly commanded her to get more, no matter where,

accompanying his order with all manner of threats. They seemed to think we could produce such things at will, much as conjurors take things out of a previously empty top-hat. The sobbing woman implored me to see what I could do and I jumped on my bicycle, taking an empty sack with me, and started on the road to Chomour. Reaching this village, I discovered an old man who used to sell tobacco before the war and explained our predicament to him. I told him that the Germans would very soon find out his place and, if he had any tobacco, would be sure to loot it all. I assured him that it would be best for him to let me have the stuff, as I would guarantee payment for it. He promptly realized that if they should search his place and discover his tobacco they would confiscate it at once, and probably commit far worse outrages. I packed two sacks full of his goods, clearing him out of everything he had, and rode away with my clumsy load. When I reached Gouvieux again and delivered it to the distracted woman, her emotion was so great that she could hardly utter a word. Her silence, however, was more expressive than all the thanks she could have spoken and her gratitude was unbounded.

Indeed, the only comfort I had in those strenuous days was in the consciousness that I could help a good many poor people and gain their respect and esteem. They were drawn very closely to me by all

that I contrived to do for them and the feeling was a gratifying one indeed. Even now I am compelled to acknowledge that these recollections afford me pleasant moments.

The Boches returned promptly on the following day and truculently inquired whether their orders had been carried out. I went out with an officer who had come for me and told him that I had visited every likely place and had brought everything I could carry away. Also I promised that if I could discover any further source of supply I would take advantage of it immediately. The only thanks he thought fit to reward me with was a gruff: "Very well! See that you do!"

He was a man of a coarser type than those who had been around us previously. As new troops kept on passing through I had to deal with different men every day, most of whom deemed boorishness and uncouth behaviour as desirable attainments. Over some of them a thin veneer of civilization has been spread, artificially as it would seem, but the breed appears to be a special one in which coarseness is ingrained.

I asked this man if he would kindly look at the sign over my door, and his demeanour changed at once. He immediately saluted me and spoke out:

"Oh! Very well! I won't forget you now."

He ordered his men to march back at once and they saluted when they passed the door. After this they

went around the church and, when they reached a point about 800 yards away on the other side of my house, turned back and went on their way. For the life of me I could not at first fathom the object of this extraordinary move. To pass away around the back of the house seemed absolutely ridiculous and unnecessary. It was only afterwards that I supposed they did it for the purpose of recognizing the place from every angle, so that they might always easily find it and perhaps avoid any molestation. At any rate they made their turn and, reaching the tobacco-shop, the sergeant pulled up his men, who came to a halt. The poor woman signalled to me and I immediately walked across to her place. In a few moments all the supplies I had procured disappeared, and she requested me to ask the officer whether she was to continue to keep the place open, since nothing was left to dispose of. When I put this question to the officer his reply came at once:

"Yes, tell her she must continue to keep it open. If she doesn't other men may pass by and see that it is a tobacco shop. Should it be closed they would probably burst their way in and cause a lot of trouble. I will see to it that as many as possible are informed that there is no tobacco left in this village nor in the two or three adjoining ones. That's the best I can do for you."

With this assurance he left me.

At eight o'clock in the morning I used to go over to a small farm house situated about a thousand yards away from my house. There I was generally able to obtain some milk for my dogs. The place was managed by an old man and his wife, who had a crippled son. It was my custom to make this little run on my wheel, with a large milk-can tied to each handlebar. I would ride over there and trundle the wheel back, since this was easier than carrying the cans. On this particular day I was passing what we call the small square in which a number of roads intersect, radiating off to Pressy, Lamorlaye, Boran, Senlis, Chantilly and Creil. A small *café* stood on this square, and as I approached two officers hurried out of it and commanded me to stop. I immediately jumped off my bicycle and they began to speak with me, telling me that they wanted me to show them the way to Lamorlaye.

"Certainly," I answered; "all you have to do is to keep straight along this road. You can't possibly stray from it unless you jump over the fences or hedges."

"That's not what we want," one of them answered. "You are to lead the way there on your bicycle. Keep in front of us all the time."

"What shall I do about my milk?" I asked.

"We will send a man over to get it and take it to your house," he answered.

I saw that I had no choice in the matter and expressed my readiness to obey their orders.

"We have an Englishman who will attend to the milk," he told me.

The man he referred to came out of the *café*, and to my surprise, I recognized him as an individual who used to work on a small stud farm in the neighbourhood and whom I knew very well. He took the cans and I told him all about the milk, pointing to my house, which he knew as well as I.

I resumed my talk with the officers and was giving them elaborate directions about the road they were about to follow me on, when my acquaintance the Colonel approached our little group, in quite a friendly way, and asked me what we were talking about. He wanted to know whether there was any trouble.

"No trouble at all Colonel," I replied. "I've only been telling these gentlemen about the road to Lamorlaye. They have told me to lead them there on my bicycle. I told them they couldn't miss their way, since, as you know very well, the road is a perfectly straight one."

"Yes, I know it perfectly well," he answered. "But I want you to go on, ahead of these men. I have my own reasons for this. Get on your bicycle and keep about a hundred and fifty yards in front of them."

In an undertone he went on:

"You stick to a three minute gait and don't you dare look back."

By this he meant that I should go at a fairly moderate gait, as the term is one used in the paddocks to indicate a fair rate such as is adopted in exercising racing horses.

At first the Colonel's orders puzzled me a little, but I soon understood that it was a precaution they were taking against suddenly meeting French troops.

"You are to keep straight on as if you were an apprentice on his first ride," he went on. "You know the lads were told to go straight ahead, looking neither to the right or left till they passed the winning post."

I understood that I must not turn till I had reached Lamorlaye and the racing establishment of Mr. Drury, the American owner of race-horses, and I began to lead the way until we reached the stables, where I jumped off. When the Colonel came along I told them that these were the Drury stables, a fact he was perfectly aware of.

"Yes, that's all right," he answered. "Do you think there are any horses here that we could use for the army?"

"I hardly think so," I replied. "The only horses left are two year olds and yearlings that would be of no use to your men, at any rate this year. It might be best for you to go through the stables and see for

yourself, because there might be one or two animals I am not familiar with. I don't want you to blame me if you find that my information is not quite correct."

"Very well," he agreed. "You will go with me into some of the stables and we will see what we can find."

He called six of his men to accompany us and we went around to several of the stables. I waited outside while they were searching for horses, for there was not the slightest need of my directing them. They knew the various places just as well as I, if not better.

Shortly afterwards he took me to a breeding establishment.

"We might find one or two that they have turned out into the paddocks to convey the impression that they are for breeding purposes," he told me.

In this place there was a mare of my own and another belonging to my friend Mr. B., and this fact made me feel rather uncomfortable. I supposed that the men would immediately pick out these two animals. But they drove them off into a corner and the Colonel beckoned me to come over to him.

"Look here, Mitchell," he asked; "isn't that one of yours?"

I admitted that it was my property and he asked me if there was anything the matter with the animal. I answered that there was not, but that I thought she

could hardly be of any use for the army because she was very easily excited. I told him that his own experience with her would confirm my statement.

"Well, what about the other one?" he asked.

"Don't you think her too big and clumsy?" I replied. "I should hardly think she would be suitable."

"I'm not so sure about that," answered the Colonel.

In an effort to gain a point I told him to use his own judgment, adding that I did not wish to influence his actions.

He made no reply, examining the horses very carefully and appearing to do a lot of thinking. Finally he turned to me:

"Never mind, Monsieur Mitchell, I think we'll leave them both here and take the matter up again later on."

From that place we went over to another stable and, on our way, he spoke again:

"I'm not going to take your mare, Mitchell, and I'll give orders that she is not to be taken by any one else."

I thanked him for his consideration and was greatly pleased, naturally enough. I could ill afford to lose the mare and was glad indeed that it was spared. We continued our search from stable to stable, but everywhere he was disappointed, finding nothing that could be of any use to him. Finally he turned to me and told me I might go back to Gouvieux.

After I had thanked him again and gone on a few paces towards my bicycle the idea struck me that it was more than likely that I would meet other soldiers on my way back and that they might make it hard for me to reach my home. Should I be questioned they might refuse to believe that I had been acting as a guide to the Colonel, and there was no proof that I could offer. In this dilemma I returned to him for advice. As soon as I explained the situation to him he searched his pocket and pulled out a few cards—of about the size of a postal—and wrote something on both sides, to the effect that I was not to be stopped and that I should be permitted to pass through the lines. He also signed both sides of the card.

I was delighted at this, feeling that the document might be an invaluable one to me and realizing that it might solve many a difficulty later on. There was a drawback, however, in the fact that if I should come across any French soldiers in the woods or on the neighbouring roads, things might go hard with me. I considered the fact that they might arrest me as a spy and accuse me of having assisted the Germans in leading them to Lamorlaye. The possession of this card would be bound to confirm them in this belief.

I was relieved at the partial protection it afforded me, however, and little realized at the time how invaluable it was to prove. But for this card I could never have undertaken the journeys I shall speak of

further on, and it certainly saved my life on several occasions when I thought that my last moment had come. Of all the mementoes I have gathered during the course of those strenuous months, it is the one I value most, and my wife shares in this estimation. She has placed it in safekeeping to be framed after the war.

CHAPTER VI

I PREPARE FOR A JOURNEY

I SHALL here take the liberty of telling my readers that I have ridden in the fastest mile in England, at the races at Lingfield. I have also been in racing automobiles and have had a number of flights in aeroplanes, so that I am a fair judge of speed. The distance between Lamorlaye and Gouvieux is something over two miles, on a very good road. I honestly think this distance was never covered by cyclist or auto or steed, in fact by anything but possibly a bird, at the rate my fears urged me to keep up. I was neither anxious to meet Germans or French on my return journey.

I found a number of my friends at my door. Among them was the priest, the secretary from the mayor's office, and several others. They had all been enquiring what had become of me and were all most anxious about me. Some of them despaired of seeing me again. They knew I had been taken away by the soldiers and feared that the worst had happened to me. When they caught sight of me as I

came around the corner on my wheel they leaped for very joy. I dismounted and sank on a chair. Fully ten minutes elapsed before I could recover my breath and speak distinctly. At last I was able to explain what had happened and related my experience since I had left, some four hours previously. I was very careful to say nothing about the card I had obtained, however, and, at this time, did not mention it even to my wife. I christened it my "German Passport."

After I was rested I went in the house and told my son that I thought I would go for a little walk. The dogs had been so greatly deprived of any exercise that some of them were acting peculiarly. They were all exceedingly restless. I decided to take about a dozen of them out with me for a run. Among them were three very large Irish wolfhounds and a couple of big deerhounds. The remainder were chiefly Airedales. My son Freddie took the smaller dogs and I looked after the large ones. All of them were delighted at the prospect of a little exercise. We would gladly have turned them loose, but were afraid they might be shot if they came unaware across some German soldiers.

We went around by the road to Lies, and came to cross-roads where two or three Germans were on guard. They spoke to us pleasantly enough and seemed to be greatly interested in the dogs, asking me all sorts of questions in regard to their various

breeds and where they came from. I told them all they wished to know. One of these men knew where my house was situated and recognized me at once, saluting. I was glad of this, as it put me more at ease. We continued to talk for some time about the dogs, as the soldiers plied me with more questions. I was glad enough to answer, of course, since one had to be civil to these fellows. One of them appeared to be particularly interested. He wore the stripes of a corporal. Very soon he expressed a desire for one of the Airedales, or for a puppy, which he wanted to send back to his country. I had to tell him that if he wanted one he could have it, and that there were some puppies in my paddocks that he could choose from.

I had learned to miss no opportunity of ingratiating myself with these men. It is hardly worth while to say that my motive was always an ulterior one—the possibility of being able to be of assistance in keeping them from molesting us or the other villagers. Moreover I knew perfectly well that if this corporal really wanted one of my dogs he would take it with or without permission. Hence it was better to offer it as cheerfully as I could.

One of these fellows asked me if any of these dogs would hunt and pick up rabbits or pheasants for t em. I had to tell them that they had not been t ained for such work, since it was against the laws in

this district. I explained that they were only show-dogs, and that many of them had won prizes. I also told them that they were quite clever enough to be trained for sporting purposes. Since I took no interest in that branch of the business, I added, the animals knew nothing about it, but, being young, would learn very rapidly.

The corporal said that he would be glad to have me show him over the kennels and I told him I would take pleasure in so doing. We parted in very friendly fashion and I started for the road leading to Pressy. After we had proceeded for about a mile and a half we came to other crossroads, one of which led to Pressy. We had only gone a short distance when we came across another party of Germans, who stopped us and asked us in what direction we were going. I told them where we were bound, explaining where we had come from. These fellows also admired the dogs and one man dismounted from his horse to have a better look at them. He asked me whether they would be apt to bite him. I assured him he was quite safe as they would never touch him under the present conditions, but that in their own home they would be inclined to be rather vicious, as they were excellent watchdogs. The larger of these animals were tremendous things, more like donkeys than dogs, in size. One of the soldiers declared that he would not like to enter my place and meet such

brutes. He laughed at this and said to his companions that it would be well to locate our place in order to avoid it.

We were allowed to start home again. As soon as we reached Gouvieux I heard that the Colonel had been inquiring for me at my house. My wife had informed him that I had started off for a walk with my son and some of the dogs. He asked her in what direction I had gone and she told him that she could not tell him exactly, though she thought it likely that I had gone towards Lies and Pressy.

My son and I went around to one side of the church and there we met him. He got off his horse and, turning it over to a soldier, came over to where I stood opposite the church door, greeting me with a pleasant "Good morning." I saluted and said, "Good morning, Colonel."

"You have a fine lot of dogs there, Mitchell," he told me. "I have seen them before and I wonder that they allow you to keep them now."

"Well," I answered, "there is no one to prevent me from so doing at present, except yourself."

"You know I wouldn't order you to destroy them," he told me. "I'm quite aware of how fond you are of them."

I thanked him and, during the course of conversation, he told me that they would want more biscuits very soon. At this news my heart sank into my boots.

The thought that I must return to that awful task and help feed an army of men was anything but a pleasant one. But of course we always tried to please these people and to carry out all their orders, since it might save trouble in the end. After this he informed me that he wanted to see me on the following morning in regard to explaining to the authorities some facts about an army that would soon be coming this way. Then he mounted his horse and rode away.

He did not come before ten o'clock on the following morning. Fifty thousand soldiers, he informed me, were expected to reach Chantilly very soon. The Crown Prince was to be with this army. I was to try to inform all the inhabitants that they must on no account close their doors. Everything must be left open so that the men might walk in freely. Any hindrance offered to this would be severely punished. He assured me that this was the only safe course to follow, for as soon as the men discovered that everything was open and that they could have a free hand and go wherever they wanted to, they would be apt to disturb no one. The Crown Prince, he informed me also, expected to occupy the château with his staff.

A day or two later I went over to the mayor's office, where I found the officials greatly distressed and badly worried. There was no means of their communicating with Paris, and these men were in despair. The fifty thousand Germans, they knew, were getting very

close to Chantilly. They gave me to understand that the mayor at Chantilly had been visited by the Crown Prince and had been compelled to show him the Grand Château of the Duke of Chartres. It had been his unpleasant duty to accompany the Prince to the château on a tour of inspection, and the latter had signified his intention of making his headquarters there.

There was not a soul to take a message to Paris and they did not know what to do. They felt that the fate of the city might depend on this move. In a moment I had sized up the situation. It was now a matter of life and death and some one must go to Paris with the news. I volunteered to make the trip on my bicycle if they would give me a safe convoy through the French lines. The official stared at me.

"There will be no trouble about the French," he told me. "It is the Germans who will prevent you from passing."

I merely answered that they would have to leave that to me.

I don't think I can ever forget the frenzied condition of the poor man's mind. He broke down and began to cry like a child.

"Mitchell," he sobbed, "if you only could know what it would mean to get a message over to Paris! It might be the means of saving thousands upon thousands of soldiers, not to speak of civilians!"

But he could not agree to let me go. He assured

me that the danger was too great and that my life would be uselessly sacrificed. The danger was too great. It was insurmountable. But I was determined and, as I kept on insisting, he finally said that if I went I must do so on my own responsibility and at my own risk.

By this time I was firmly resolved to go. It was the one and only thing to be done at this moment. When I thought of all that was at stake I could not hesitate. Finally I told him that I would start and take my boy Freddie with me.

Risking my boy's life was a bitter chance to take, but I do not speak French very fluently and hardly saw my way to carry out my plan without his aid. His mere presence might make us less amenable to suspicion, we thought. I knew that I might have nearly as much trouble in traversing the French lines as the German ones, and his fluent knowledge of the language must be of the greatest assistance.

I returned home, slowly, thinking over this undertaking and knowing how my announcement would be received by my wife and daughter. They would allow me to go, I knew, and the mother would spare her son, but the heartache I must inflict on her made me very sad. I could picture her worry and fear during all the time that would elapse before my return. But something had to be done, and no others could possibly undertake this journey.

CHAPTER VII

GETTING THROUGH

In this anxious state of mind I reached my home, dreading the ordeal of explaining everything to my wife and daughter. They saw that something of importance was on my mind and questioned me. Somewhat nervously, I must confess, I told them what I had decided to do. I had expected them to be distressed and badly frightened at the prospect before me, but their emotion was hard to witness. I sought to reassure and comfort them by telling them not to worry, and that I was persuaded that I would get through all right.

Taking my wife by the arm I led her into another room, where we could talk over the matter quietly. I showed her my German "passport" and told her that she must on no account mention it to any one. It was best, I explained to her, that no one should know by what means I might be permitted to get through the Hun lines. When I expressed my desire to take my son with me and asked whether she would spare him I saw that it was a blow that struck her hard. To my surprise, however, she consented, readily but sorrow-

fully, realizing that my French was insufficient to carry me through if long explanations had to be made. No one could ever tell that the boy was English whereas my accent distinguished me at once. How much my wife's consent cost her I may never be able to realize. Mothers readily and bravely give up their sons, in these trying days, but the danger is usually still far away and the chances of return probably greater than they were in our case.

I called in my son and we had a little heart to heart talk over the matter. I found the plucky boy not only ready but eager to start. At once we made all preparations for leaving immediately and packed our kits with everything that might be needed in case of a breakdown. After this had been attended to I called at the mayor's office, where I was entrusted with a very small piece of tissue paper—a letter—which I was instructed to deliver as soon as possible to the Prefect of Police in Paris. The important question of how I should conceal this document flashed through my mind and I puzzled over it for a moment. Finally I pulled off my right boot and slipped the thing under a steel arch support I was in the habit of wearing, after which I laced up the boot again. The man was rather amazed at seeing me do this, but no time was left for more words. He shook hands with me and wished me Godspeed, in a voice that was shaky with emotion:

"France," he faltered, "will be proud of you if you prove able to carry this through."

What the real purport of that note was I may never know, since I never read the message I bore, but I am very certain that it was of the utmost importance. Indeed I am very confident that it made it possible for the high officials in Paris to gain headway in hastening troops to the front. It is certain that they immediately hurried off every means of conveyance they could put their hands on towards the battle lines. A host of automobiles, auto-busses, taxis, trucks of all kinds, hustled off to the seat of trouble bearing unending crowds of soldiers and firemen or laden with all the equipment needed to help stop the Germans and push them back in their advance towards the great city the Huns already deemed within their grasp.

The boy and I started at about noon, an hour I selected because I thought the roads might be fairly deserted then. The soldiers, I thought, might be scattered about the woods preparing food and taking a rest. The day was a beautiful one, and so scorching hot that we were glad that trees shaded the road on a good part of our way. We rode rather slowly, knowing that the way was long before us and believing that any appearance of hurrying would more easily arouse suspicion.

As far as Lamorlaye we met no one. The trip was beginning auspiciously. In this village, however,

some of the inhabitants who knew us called out that the Germans were only a short way ahead. They appeared to be amazed at our going on, and cried out again that we were running into danger.

But we kept on, of course, for about a mile and a half further, till we reached the well-known Oak Tree. This is a place of some historic interest. The great tree stands in the middle of a sort of square at the intersection of two roads. Upon its branches, in 1870, some men the invaders captured had been hung. In its shade a large command, forming part of the German right wing, had rested and indulged in something that had been pretty nearly a vast orgy, to celebrate their impending entry into the capital of France.

In this place my boy and I came uncomfortably near to sharing the fate of the prisoners of forty-four years before. The place forms a sort of circle. Soldiers were scattered all around it, and many others occupied the woods surrounding us. Six of them ordered us to halt, so that we had to slow down and dismount immediately. With the uncouth roughness peculiar to the breed they asked us where we were going and for what purpose we were traveling.

I was fortunate indeed in inventing, on the spur of the moment, a plausible excuse. I explained that we were in the sorest straits for provisions, and that some of the troops in our village were very badly in need of tobacco, cigars and cigarettes, and that we were

trying to get to Paris to procure these things, as well as news of the war. At this they seemed to be rather interested, but gruffly ordered us to leave our bicycles on the ground and step into the woods. I had of course shown them the card the Colonel had given me, and they inspected it with the greatest care, finally handing it back to me. Their manner, however, was by no means reassuring, and I shall never forget the look upon my poor boy's face when we started for those woods. I am sure he believed that our last hour had come, and I will acknowledge that I believed the same thing. I did my very best, however, not to display any nervousness or fear, and believe that my efforts were fairly successful.

Harshly they ordered us both to take off all our clothing in order to search us.

"If you have any papers," said one of them, "hand them over to us at once or it will go hard with you!"

These fellows spoke very threateningly and I could see that my boy was in an agony of fear. I assured them that I had no papers whatever excepting some cards that they would find in my coat-pocket, and the Colonel's pass. They immediately searched the pockets and examined these cards also, very closely. One of them spied my jockey's license, and I am very certain that it was, at this time, the means of saving our lives. My photograph was attached to this document and they could easily see that it was entirely

genuine. One or two of the men, in fact, seemed to have recognized me. They did not know at this time that England had declared war against them, and considered me as a neutral, I suppose. After they had searched our coats our waistcoats had to come off, and then our shirts, all of which were inspected, so that at last there remained but our boots to be taken off. We sat down to obey this order, with such feelings as may readily be imagined. A few minutes more, we thought, and the game would be up and our bodies probably dangling on the branches of the famous oak. I commenced on my left boot, having some little trouble to unfasten the laces, since I was praying for time. Finally I pulled the boot off, and then the sock, through which they searched with their wonted care.

Only the right one was left now, with its deadly document. I slowly began to unlace the boot and, turning to my son, I spoke to him as calmly as I could.

"It's a terrible thing," I told him, "that these men absolutely refuse to take any notice of their own Colonel's card and his signatures. As soon as I see him again and tell him about this I wonder what he will say when he hears that his pass was of no service in seeing us through."

As soon as I said this one of the men spoke out:

"Get up and put on your clothes again," he ordered.

"Shall I take off this boot?" I asked.

"No, hurry up and get dressed."

But I took my time about doing this, trying in the meanwhile to look as indifferent as possible. Freddie, however, probably beat his best record at putting his clothes on. He had been deadly pale and, most of the time, I had looked away from him and turned my right foot out of his sight, that his anxious looks might not betray me.

Then the man came to me, looking somewhat worried, and told me that there was no need whatever of saying anything to the Colonel about this matter of their not heeding his pass.

"You know that we have other officers that we must obey also," he said. "You can go now as soon as you are ready."

As we were about to start he came up to me again.

"If you are going to Paris when do you expect to get back here?" he asked.

I told him that we would do our very best to return some time in the afternoon of the next day, if we were successful in getting through. They told me then that they would be on duty in this place in the afternoon, about the time I had mentioned, and asked me if I could not manage to procure some cigarettes for them. I assured them that I would do this most willingly, foreseeing the probable need of making more trips that way and anxious to be as friendly as possible

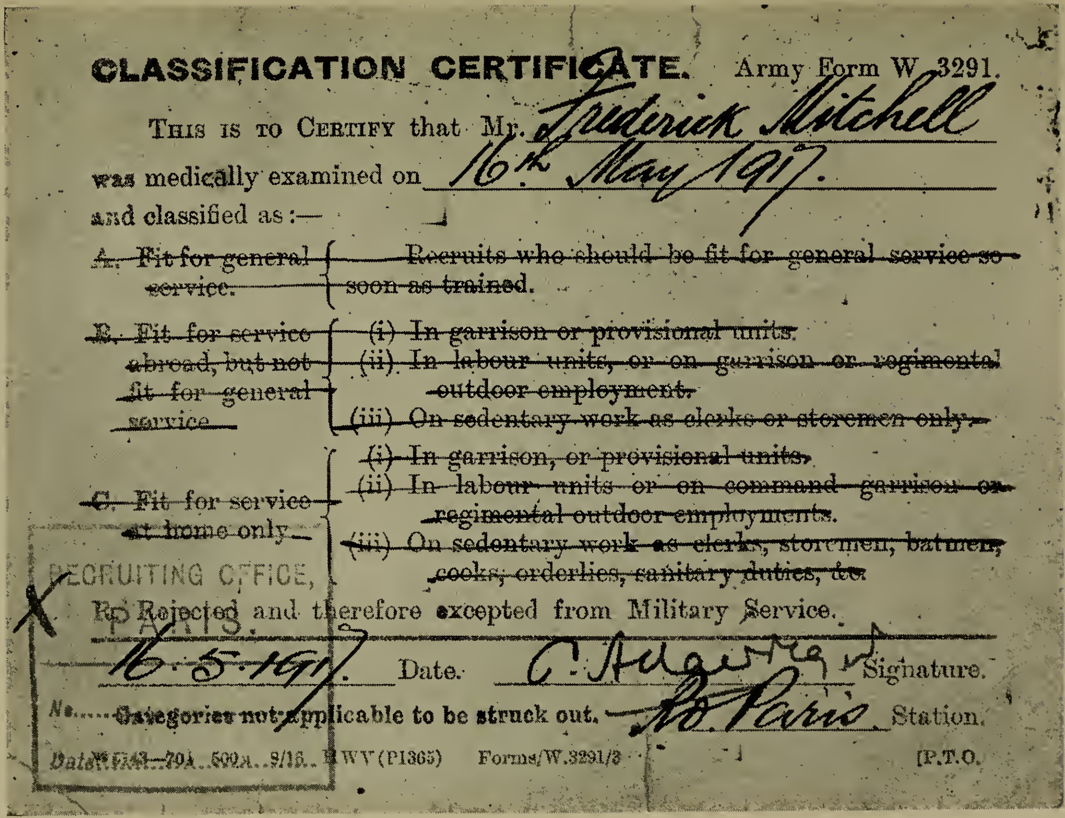
with these men, I promised that I would surely bring them a supply if I possibly could.

We started off again, mightily relieved, but were pulled up again after we had hardly gone another mile. Here I again displayed my passport from the Colonel and the soldiers on guard angrily asked why the men at the Oak Tree had not properly stamped it to show that I must be allowed to pass on. Of course there was no explanation that I could make, saving to assure them I was very sorry that this had been neglected. They discussed the matter among themselves for some time and finally one of them spoke to us:

"All right! You can go on!"

Before we mounted, however, they bombarded me with inquiries as to what I was going to do, and what was the business that caused me to go, with a host of other questions about myself. I suppose I acquitted myself to their satisfaction for at last they allowed us to go on.

We kept on our way, again breathing freely, until we had journeyed for about an hour. At times we dismounted and led our wheels, walking up the steeper hills to save ourselves a little. We passed through Luzarches and Montaterre. Here, to our intense satisfaction, we came upon a lot of French recruits. There were thousands and thousands training throughout all the outlying districts. As we rode on, wearily, owing to the great heat, we were surprised to come



CLASSIFICATION CERTIFICATE. Army Form W. 3291.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that Mr. Frederick Mitchell

was medically examined on 16th May 1917.

and classified as:—

A. Fit for general service. — Recruits who should be fit for general service so soon as trained.

B. Fit for service abroad, but not fit for general service — (i) In garrison or provisional units. (ii) In labour units, or on garrison or regimental outdoor employment. (iii) On sedentary work as clerks or storemen only.

C. Fit for service at home only. — (i) In garrison, or provisional units. (ii) In labour units or on command garrison or regimental outdoor employments. (iii) On sedentary work as clerks, storemen, batmen, cooks, orderlies, sanitary duties, &c.

RECRUITING OFFICE, PARIS.

Rejected and therefore excepted from Military Service.

16-5-1917. Date. C. Augier Signature.

No. ..... Categories not applicable to be struck out. Paris Station.

Date ... W5143—791 500A. 9/15. HWV(P1365) Forms/W.3291/3 [P.T.O.

FRED MITCHELL'S CLASSIFICATION CERTIFICATE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

to fortifications that had been contrived on the road with the aid of trees that had been recently felled, among which were piled up tremendously heavy cars and trucks, all mixed up with barbed wire.

Every other sort of obstruction imaginable was blocking the roads, and we had a hard time of it, having to pick up our bicycles in our arms and carry them across fields and hedges and fences for about two miles, circling around until we managed to get by these defences and to return to the road once more. Riding on a short distance we came to more obstacles that had to be negotiated in the same way. When we had surmounted the difficulty again we had to pass a sentry who was stationed on the main road. He hurried over to us and asked for our passes. We pulled out the passports that had been given us at the mayor's office in Gouvieux and showed them to him. This, however, failed to satisfy him and he plied us with all sorts of questions:

"How do I know that you are the persons mentioned in this pass?" he asked.

We were compelled to argue over the matter with him for some time, till I suggested that the best thing to do would be for him to take us over to his commanding officer, which he agreed to do. Another soldier led us into a village near by, where we found the mayor's office. In the first room we were met by a man in charge who immediately questioned us in re-

gard to the business that brought us there. I showed him the pass, but he shook his head.

"We can't possibly allow you to proceed on the strength of this," he declared. "And we know that there are many of the Germans on the road over which you say you came. It seems very peculiar that they should have allowed you to pass through them and cover all this distance to the French lines."

I explained to him all the incidents that had led up to our effort to get to Paris.

"I am intrusted with a very special mission," I told him. "I have a most important message that is to be delivered to the Prefect of Police in Paris and it is urgent that I should reach there at the earliest possible moment. I know that if you ever realize the importance of my errand you will all your life regret having detained me in this way."

He insisted on knowing exactly what it was that I must deliver so soon in Paris and I explained that it was impossible for me to tell him, since I did not know myself the purport of the document.

"I shall soon find a way to make you tell me," he replied, angrily.

I assured him that I would be only too pleased to obey all orders if he would only take me to his superior officer, or whoever was in charge of the unit occupying the village. Again I repeated that the matter was a most serious one and that it must be looked into

at once by one of his superiors. This aroused his indignation and I was also shaking with excitement. Finally, in the midst of our excited talk, I bethought myself of my jockey's license and showed it to him.

It proved a happy thought indeed. Immediately his manner changed entirely.

"Oh! I'm ever so sorry, Mitchell," he said. "Of course I know who you are. You want to see the Major in command, naturally. I shall be very glad to take you to him at once."

He led the way into the Major's quarters and this officer asked me in very stern and gruff tones what my business was and what I was going to Paris for. I endeavoured to tell him that I had been sent by the Mairie of Gouvieux and the surrounding villages, upon a mission of the highest importance. When he asked me what it was I was again compelled to tell him I did not know. At this he again looked at me suspiciously:

"And you expect me to believe such a thing?" he asked gruffly.

I then saw that it was necessary for me to give him more exact details. I had been instructed at Gouvieux to say nothing to any one about what I knew of the impending arrival of a German army. Hence, as patiently as I could, I repeated that I had a message to deliver and that I had not the slightest idea of what it contained. The Germans, I added, had

been unable to find it when they had stripped me, and I intended to show it to no one until I delivered it to its proper destination. I begged him again not to detain my son and me any longer than he possibly could, telling him that it was too bad that after risking our lives among the Germans and successfully passing through, we should be detained by the French we were trying to serve. We had expected trouble from the Boches, I told him, but had certainly not anticipated being held up after we should have reached what we had thought would be a haven of safety. I told him that it was a disgrace that the French should give me more trouble than the Germans had. Finally I showed him my jockey's license, hoping that it might have some effect on him since it identified me as a law-abiding dweller in a French community.

This delay was maddening, and I was beginning to shake all over with the rage I sought to control. When my life and my son's had been for a time hardly worth a minute's purchase I had managed to keep calm, since we were in the hands of the enemy, but now it seemed as if our best friends were betraying me.

CHAPTER VIII

PARIS AT LAST

I PRESUME that my manner finally convinced the Major of my sincerity and of the urgency of my mission. At any rate his ideas began to veer around, and finally he handed me a short note he had written and which I was to present if I should happen to be stopped again. He told me that it would permit me to proceed with no further delays.

He appeared to have so well realized that he had been mistaken in suspecting my intentions that at last he apologized for my detention at his hands. He was exceedingly anxious to hear more about the treatment I had received from the Germans and how we had managed to get through their lines. My haste was so great that, pleased as I would have been to comply with his wishes, I was forced to tell him that I must be on my way at once. I told him that I was grateful to him for the pass he had been kind enough to give me, but that we were bent on saving time, and he allowed us to depart.

Indeed I felt that the message I carried must be of the utmost importance and was persuaded that it

would probably be the means of saving not only lives but perhaps the city itself. The delays had driven me nearly frantic and, in spite of our weariness, when we were free again we rode as fast as ever we could. When we reached St. Denis, on the outskirts of the city, we placed our machines in a *café*, whose proprietor promised to look out for them till the next day. We could find swifter means of communication now, since we could take a tram that would allow us to get off close to the Rue des Batignolles, where we delivered our message.

We entered the building and got into a sort of lobby, in which was a long wide counter, behind which were several gendarmes, busily writing out passports and other papers. Our appearance must have been somewhat remarkable since we were covered with the sweat and the dust accumulated on our long trip.

"What do you want?" asked one of them.

"My father has a message for the Prefect of Police," answered my son.

"Wait a moment, I will get it for you," I told the man.

When I started to take my boot off I saw that these men had some doubts in regard to my sanity. By this time they were neglecting their work and staring at us with intense curiosity. Finally I pulled out the document and handed it to one of them.

"Please see that the Prefect gets this immediately," I urged him.

"Where do you people come from?" he questioned me.

"From Gouvieux," I answered.

At this they all crowded around me.

"Do you mean from Gouvieux near Chantilly?" he asked, intensely surprised.

"Certainly," I replied.

"Impossible!" he shouted. "'Tis in the hands of the Boches."

So great was his amazement that he stood there, with the note in his hand, forgetting that he had been asked to deliver it at once. When he finally departed he backed out, staring at us till he disappeared behind a door.

The other men began to ply me with questions. They were quite incredulous yet. The dust on my face made me quite unrecognizable, I suppose, and our weariness was such that I was anxious to get away as soon as possible. Finally I showed him the passport I had received from the mayor's office at Gouvieux and my son pulled his also. They examined them, greatly interested, and finally I pulled out my jockey's license and also showed it.

"Nom de Dieu!" bellowed one of them, "it is Mitchell, the jockey!"

"It is," I assured him, "and now we can't wait

any longer. You can see for yourselves that we are utterly exhausted. If you need us further you can get us at once."

"Where are you going?" he asked me.

"To my brother-in-law's, Mr. Thomas Peacock, just a little way around the corner," I told him.

They allowed us to go, but I was at once aware that a lad was following us. Once he passed us, looking mightily indifferent, and slowed down again. He certainly saw us enter the house I had mentioned.

Before leaving I had told these men that I would call in the morning, in case there was any answer to be taken back.

We lost no time in getting in. My brother-in-law was absent, but his wife and brother were there. They received us like lost sheep, absolutely delighted to see us. Scarcely could they get over their surprise, for the general impression was that everything had been blown up and nearly every one killed in the districts we came from.

At once they made some tea ready for us, which gave us most needed refreshment. We had been afforded a badly needed opportunity of washing up a little. My boy was so utterly exhausted that after some tea and bread and butter, with a little fish that was prepared for him, he asked to go to bed, where he was soon dead to the world. I went out to purchase the provision of tobacco and cigars and ciga-

rettes I needed, the promise of which had greatly facilitated our journey. A little later we had dinner, as my brother-in-law returned. When this was finished he was most anxious to hear more about my journey but I was nodding helplessly in my chair. Finally I staggered off to bed, where I fell asleep like a dead man. Our experiences had been too exciting, I suppose, for a couple of hours later I awoke with a start, and kept on tossing about for most of the remainder of the night.

We rose but a short time before eight o'clock in the morning and, after breakfast, looked over some of the stuff we had to take back with us. Then I made my way over to the Gendarmerie. When I entered the head official was in the reception room and came over to me.

"You are Mr. Mitchell?" he asked me.

I confirmed his statement and he asked me to step into another room with him, where he bade me sit down. I perched myself upon a high stool that stood there.

"Now what can I do for you?" he asked me.

"I have come to know whether there is any answer to the letter I brought you."

"Do you know what was in it?" he inquired.

"No, I never looked at it," I replied.

"Have you any idea of the nature of the message?" he asked again.

"Of course," I said.

"Well, tell me what it is," he said, looking keenly at me.

"I'll never tell that to any one," I answered.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded, sharply.

"You have the note and I give you my word I never looked at it," I told him. "Of course I must have formed some opinion about the nature of this errand but I don't feel disposed to give it to any one."

"Well, perhaps you are right," he admitted. "Now tell me what I can do for you."

"I want my answer for the Mairie in Gouvieux," I told him, "and it should be a verbal one because I don't care about carrying papers again. We found it rather risky. Also I wish you would give me a passport so that I may get through your lines without hindrance."

He at once complied with this request, giving passes both to my son Freddie and myself.

"As to the answer," he said, "tell them at Gouvieux that we will do all in our power to execute the commission as soon as possible; perhaps within twenty-four hours."

Then he turned to Freddie, putting his hand on the lad's shoulder.

"I wish you a safe journey, my boy," he said, in a voice that showed some emotion. "I hope with all

my heart that I shall be able to see you again soon, my brave little boy, as well as your father."

He accompanied us to the door and watched us for a moment as we went down the street.

So we took the tramway again for St. Denis. Going over to the *café* where we had left the bicycles I found that my boy had some room left in his pockets, so I went into a shop and bought a further supply, being anxious to bring back all we could carry. In the *café* we had some lunch, after which we started, at noon or shortly after.

Freddie had rested well during the night, and had pretty nearly got over his emotions. In the tramway, however, I had been surprised when he leaned his head on my shoulder, looking at me with eyes that expressed wonder:

"Dad dear," he said. "How did you ever manage to keep up so strongly? I never thought you could have held yourself in so bravely, and never allowed them to suspect that anything was up. I felt as if I must give way, more than once, and if they had taken me away from you I'm afraid I would have become so crazy that I would have told them about that letter you carried. I'm so happy now that you managed to put them off the track. I—I couldn't speak about it last evening. It seems to me that my head was whirling. All night I was dreaming about our journey, and I wonder how we shall manage to

get back. But I have confidence now for I know you can beat them. I think I've become twenty years older since yesterday. Of course I'm only a boy, but I feel that I have learned ever so much—more than I ever expected to learn. I shall be very careful in future, on our trips here and back. Please, Dad, promise me that in future you will always take me with you, even for short distances around home?"

He stopped a moment, while I touched his hand to calm him, but he went on:

"When you spoke to me in that wood about the Colonel's passport and his signature I hadn't the slightest idea that you were trying to make them tell you to put on your clothes again. I was sure that in a moment we would both be bayonetted or shot, especially when you began to unlace that right boot. Oh, Dad! How I trembled! I shall never forget it as long as I live."

The poor boy was pouring out his heart to me, and I could see how terribly trying his experience had been to him.

The day was again a hot one. We looked after our bicycles and saw that they were in good order, and by noon we were on our way. The obstacles on the road gave us ever so much trouble, as had happened on the previous way. It was very fatiguing to be obliged to go back and forth across the fields, carrying our machines with their heavy loads. With

this sort of thing we had constantly to contend, till at last we came to the French sentry. He came up to us, being joined by other soldiers, and asked where we were going. We willingly told him, but it was not our friend of the day before, and he had to go through all sorts of formalities and to make inquiries whether or not he should let us pass. All this, of course, meant vexatious delay, and we were glad enough when some one in authority decided that we might be permitted to continue our journey.

After this we travelled about four miles further, overcoming more difficulties on the way and having again to carry our machines till we could come to clear portions of the road, and we came across another French sentry. This soldier knew us, however, for he had seen us on the day before and he at once took us over to the Major's quarters. The latter asked me what sort of reception we had received in Paris. We were eager to let him know that we had met with the most cordial reception, and kept up some conversation with him for a few minutes. I could see that he was very curious to know all about our trip to Paris, and especially to hear how in the world we had managed to get through the German posts on our way. I had to explain to him that I hardly had time to give him all this information, as we had to hurry on, but told him that I would probably be back on the following day, when I hoped to be able to tell

him more of our experiences. He seemed to appreciate the fact that we did not want to dwell much on this subject. The good fellow realized that our experience had been a rather distressing one. He had seen, on the previous day, how badly upset and played out we were, and sympathized with us heartily.

"That experience of yours should certainly be rewarded by a medal," he told me, "even without counting your success in getting your message to Paris."

"Well," I answered, "I certainly thought I was going to get the famous 'wooden cross' yesterday morning, and so did my son."

"Ah!" he answered. "That's a brave little fellow. I am very sure you will get a better cross than that one, and I know that France will never forget what you have accomplished in taking that letter to its destination, through such terrible difficulties and facing such dangers. Whatever may have been its importance, I am certain that if you don't obtain your deserts during the war France will always be grateful for what you have done for her and for the poor people in your villages."

"Well," I told him, "there was no other way of looking after those poor folk. I hope that what I have been able to do will show that I have tried to do my bit."

The Major shook my hand, in the friendliest way, and wished us a safe journey back.

So we continued our trip until we reached Luzarches, where we stopped at a pump to have a drink of water and rest for a few minutes. I took this occasion to warn my boy to be most careful about everything he said.

"If they ask you any questions," I told him, "never look at me when you answer. Reply to them one by one, as they come, and don't appeal to me by word or look for this will certainly arouse their suspicions."

After this we resumed our journey and had covered about a couple of miles when we came across two Germans. They halted us and asked us where we were going, and I told them.

"Yes," said one of them. "You passed through here yesterday. I remember you. Did you bring back those cigarettes?"

"Yes," I answered, "and I will be glad to let you have a package of them, and some tobacco."

"You should have brought us more than that," he said, rather displeased.

I explained that we had brought some more but that we had promised them to his friends further on. Otherwise, I told him, we would have been able to give him a larger supply. I was careful to tell him that we would be passing on this road every day or two, if he and the other soldiers would allow us to, and that we would be only too glad to render them any

little services in our power. This seemed to affect him quite favourably, and he appeared to be quite won over to us.

Well pleased with the result of this meeting we went on until we reached the Oak Tree, which we approached with some misgivings. Our terrible experience there was too recent to allow of our passing it without a shudder. We saw men gathered near it, and went up to them, feeling rather nervous. We were glad to find that they were the same who had stopped us on the previous day and they appeared to be quite delighted to see us again, wanting to know what we had brought. I told them they might as well search for themselves, expressing my readiness to undress again.

"No," said one of them. "Tell us what you have. Are you carrying any letters?"

I truthfully answered that we had none, although we had brought one or two newspapers, but that we had the cigarettes and tobacco we had promised to bring back. I had brought each of them a package of "Marylands" and another of "Soldier's Tobacco." They actually paid me a mark each for the supply, which I accepted rather as a souvenir than as pay for my trouble. After this they asked me if it would be possible for me to have some letters mailed for them in Paris. I intimated that this would be quite easy and that I could see no harm in doing it. I

knew, of course, that every letter would be censored in Paris, and that it might perhaps give the Government an opportunity of learning something, so that I thought my acting as a mail-carrier might be of some advantage. It would further ingratiate me with the men and might also be of service to France. I promised to take them with me if they would have them ready on the next day.

When we reached Lamorlaye several of the inhabitants came out and asked us for news. It must be realized that for weeks we had all been in complete ignorance of what was taking place. I had to tell them that there was nothing encouraging in the news but that we would try to gather more information on our next trip. We went around to the Mairie and suggested that if the official might have it announced that we would be ready, on the next day, to convey letters to Paris. They would have to be directed in care of my brother-in-law, 99 Rue le Gendre, and must all be left unsealed so that they might be examined by either Germans or French. I said that I would seal and mail them myself upon arrival, and that the writers must instruct their correspondents to send replies to the same address. They were loud in their appreciation of what I was ready to do for them.

Without hindrance we continued our journey to our own village of Gouvieux, a distance of some two miles. The people seemed to be nearly crazed with

joy at our return, and I shall never forget the reception they gave us. The poor things were weeping and laughing at the same time, as they lifted up their arms and cheered when they saw us coming. The joy of these people really seemed like some sort of compensation for all that we had endured. I need, of course, say nothing in regard to the happiness with which my wife and daughter received us. They had been devoured with anxiety and had feared the worst.

My first visit was to the Mairie, where I delivered the verbal message that I had been entrusted with by the Prefect of Police. When we related our experience the official appeared to be too overcome to be able to speak. He could only shake our hands and pat us on the shoulders, so great was his emotion. On our side we were too weary to wish to enter into long explanations. When we reached home again the news of our return had reached every nook and corner, and every individual capable of walking had come up to the house.

My wife and daughter were weeping with joy and the poor old men and women were moved to tears also. But it was utterly impossible for us to tell them at this time all that we had been through, for we were staggering with fatigue. The distance to St. Denis, about 30 miles, is by no means such as to try an ordinary bicycle rider's strength, but we had been obliged to carry our wheels for long distances in the burning

sun and to undergo emotions that had fairly played us out.

Before reaching our village I had given my boy strict injunction to keep as quiet as possible and to make no mention whatever of the various means by which we had managed to get through. I greatly feared, of course, that our German invaders should decide to prevent us from repeating this journey.

After some rest and refreshment I took a newspaper over to each of the Mairies, and another on the following morning to Chantilly. On my way there I met a squad of some sixty Germans, who halted me and put the usual question:

"Where are you going?"

I replied that I was taking a paper to the Mairie, so that it might be posted up there for every one to see. The German officers seized it at once and looked over it quickly. They were delighted to read that their army was making tremendous progress through Belgium. It was splendid news to them. They made no further inquiries. The man exclaimed "Bravo!" and told me I might go on.

I delivered the paper to the Mairie and explained some of the incidents of our journey, after which I started back home. On my return I met one or two lads who had been working in the stables and a few elderly men. They asked my opinion about things generally.

"One has to keep everything one knows about it to oneself," I told them. "A lot of queer things are going on now and the less one talks about it the better. It isn't wise to do any talking before the enemy has disappeared from these places. That's the best and only advice I can give you."

Indeed, I could see that it was becoming more and more important to be secretive, for we were all about as safe as the traditional boy sitting on the safety-valve of the racing Mississippi steamer. The Huns were so confident that early and absolute victory was in their grasp, and had been so little interfered with in our district, that our villages had been among the very few that had been spared. But I realized that these conditions might change at any minute.

CHAPTER IX

THE LOOT BEGINS

Upon reaching home I found that my son had received peremptory orders to get more biscuits ready. I exclaimed that those blessed biscuits would be the death of me. Freddie had already begun to do some baking and a few minutes later we were both hard at work.

My wife asked me if she could not help us but I was rather afraid to have her do so, as Germans might have come in at any time and seen her in the bakery. No woman, saving perhaps the oldest ones in the village, was safe from insult, and the few there were kept themselves indoors in their houses or in the old cave. But she insisted and said that if the Germans came in she would run into the back room and keep out of the way. She proved of the greatest help to us and, as a matter of fact, could beat the two of us put together. We got on wonderfully well and made considerable progress. After we had been working for several hours she persuaded us to take a rest as we were facing the hard journey to Paris on the next day.

When we returned home I found that my boy had not been able to keep entirely silent. He had revealed some of the incidents of the trip to his sister, who immediately repeated them to her mother, with the idea that we might perhaps be persuaded to give up such dangerous work. My mind was made up on this question, however. I deemed it of the greatest importance to keep up communication with Paris as long as it could be done. It was also a means of entering into the good graces of the German soldiers, by keeping them supplied with the tobacco they missed so greatly. Finally the carrying of letters for the inhabitants was bound to be of the greatest service to them. I felt also that we had opened the way and that our further trips would prove less difficult.

On the following morning I went over to the Mairie, at about eight o'clock. Orders were immediately issued that a man should be sent around to each village to announce that letters would be taken to Paris by me and that they were to be brought to the Mairies of the villages clustered near us so that they might be collected. My brother-in-law's address was given, so that replies might be sent there. It must be understood that there was absolutely no other means of communicating with their friends and relatives or with their men fighting at the front.

Finally it was understood that all the mail would be ready and gathered at the Mairie's.

The time came for us to start, and we were better equipped, this time. We carried a few provisions with us and were loaded with a rather large bundle of mail. At Lamorlaye we stopped and collected a few more letters which had been left for us there. Words can hardly express the gratitude of the poor people we thus obliged. It was a comfort to all these sufferers and indeed it was with real happiness that I was undertaking to do this for them, knowing how greatly they appreciated it.

We went past Lamorlaye, and I cannot say that we approached the famed Oak Tree in the easiest frame of mind. My boy, I could see, was pretty nervous about it. Our previous experience there had eaten pretty deeply into his soul. When the men summoned us again to halt we dismounted at once, and Freddie whispered to me, anxiously:

"Oh! Dad! It's coming again!"

I think I managed to look perfectly calm, however, and we put down our bicycles and exhibited our packages. The men asked us what we had in them and we opened everything. They carefully inspected all that we had and then ordered us to take off our coats. This we proceeded to do with less anxiety than on the previous occasion. Search as they might, we knew that we had nothing that could lead to our instant execution.

These men did not constitute the same group that

had already interviewed us, and they had to be satisfied all over again. I produced my jockey's license and my German "passport," but they stripped us to the skin, saving the fact that this time they allowed us to keep on our trousers and our boots.

The letters we carried appeared to be very objectionable and, in consequence of this, they kept us for about three quarters of an hour, examining them very thoroughly. They held a consultation, speaking among themselves very excitedly and appearing to be discussing all sorts of formalities. Finally they sent one of the soldiers with a message to some post in the neighbourhood, and of course we were closely guarded till he should return. When he came back an officer was with him and, fortunately, he recognized me.

"Oh! It's you, Mitchell," he said. "Then everything's all right."

Never in my life have I heard words that meant more cheer to me, for we were beginning to think we were again in a most unpleasant situation and the trip began to seem like a very ugly one again. In fact we had begun to suspect that we were going to meet our doom this time. When the messenger had left we certainly thought he had gone for orders to proceed to our execution.

The officer went on:

"I understand that you are going on to Paris."

"Yes, I expect to go every other day," I replied. "I have found that I can be useful to our villagers in a good many ways. Many of them are nearly starving. We expect to bring back some provisions, with cigarettes and tobacco, and we want to mail letters for them if you will allow us to do so."

He thought over this for a moment.

"Well, I don't think there will be any harm in that if our men are always given the opportunity to read them over. Should you conceal any of them I suppose you know what you can expect. When do you intend to come back?"

I told him that we hoped to return on the next day.

"All right," he said, "and there is one thing I want you to do for me. You are to bring me a box of a hundred Abdullah cigarettes—Turkish preferred. To any one who asks you you may say that they are for Lieutenant S."

Instead of giving me German money in payment he surprised me by handing to me fourteen francs. During all this time we had been compelled to remain unclothed. With his permission we got dressed again while he remained at our side until we were ready to start.

We went on, losing no time, for we had been delayed a long time, but we were halted again a little farther on, and put through the usual questioning.

In my dealings with those soldiers I soon discov-

ered that the one thing they were always craving for was tobacco and cigarettes. This time we were not treated too roughly, and the interview ended with their handing out more money for such supplies. They were French francs again. Of course I had explained to them that I had scarcely any money and that I would have to pay for those things in Paris. So anxious were they that they made not the slightest objection to paying at once for them.

Of course I have not the slightest doubt that this silver had been looted from poor French people. Under the circumstances, however, I could hardly express to these soldiers my true feelings. I could only pocket the money and start off again, thankful that another obstruction to our progress had been passed.

After arriving at Luzarches we had a bite to eat, after which we started off and met no further hindrance till we came to the French recruits, drilling away for dear life. We knew that we were bound to come across a sentry on duty at the next post. A number of soldiers were there and recognized us at once. They escorted us at once to our friend the Major, where all our letters were inspected and returned to us, with thanks for our efforts to relieve the minds of our poor villagers. The Major shook hands with me and told me that we might go on at once, also saying that he had entire confidence in me and that we

would never be troubled in the future, if he possibly could help it.

He also urged me, when I had a few minutes to spare, to come and tell me the full story of my first trip to Paris and of what we had undergone on the journey. He added that it was a pity he could not start at once with those boys who were in training and clear those Germans out. I presume that he had to obey higher orders, but I could see that the inaction irked him badly.

On we went, and when we came to the next sentry we had rather more trouble in getting through. We were detained all of a half an hour, but at last we were permitted to go through, after having passed a regular third degree of questions, all of which, fortunately, we were able to answer satisfactorily. At last the way lay open before us and at St. Denis we were glad indeed to reach the *café* where we put up our machines again. Returning to the Police Station we delivered some messages that had been given us verbally, and we explained about the letters we carried. I was told to post them wherever it might be convenient. At my brother-in-law's I obtained permission to have replies sent there, in his care. After this we visited several other places in Paris and near by. We were by no means as exhausted as we had been on the first trip. The way had doubtless been as hard, but saving for the long delay at the Oak Tree and the scare

undergone there, we had met with a great deal less trouble and had not been nearly so worried and frightened. We actually took the time to indulge in a little recreation at a moving picture show, after which we went back to dine at my brother-in-law's. These dear people were glad indeed to see us again and were feeling somewhat reassured by this time, yet they were kept on the anxious seat about us and were glad enough to know we were in safety.

In the morning we started a little earlier. We had twelve letters, to be distributed in Lamorlaye, Chantilly and Gouvieux. I also procured several French papers. I could not get any English ones as the *Daily Mail,* I believe, had suspended publication for a short time in Paris. The New York *Herald* was being printed as usual. I was rather careful to look into the papers I was bringing, for it was not at all to our interest that the Germans should know that Great Britain had declared war against them.

I may say here that a good many of the Germans took me for an American. Over my house was a large sign, displaying the words, "Anglo-American Kennels," and I had constantly been employed as a jockey for American owners who had second call for my services. I don't suppose that either an American or an Englishman would be for a moment in doubt as to my nationality, but these Boches were unfamiliar with the peculiarities of various accents. This idea

of theirs, I think, prevented them later on from abusing me as severely as they might have done, had they deemed me a native of the tight little isle.

We got the tobacco, of course, for it was the best passport we had through the German lines, but I had a great deal of trouble in obtaining Lieutenant S's cigarettes and it cost me quite a trip. Finally I got them and started towards home again.

This time everything went most smoothly through the French lines—by this time they all knew what our errands were for and what we carried—but when we reached the first German sentries they were exceedingly abusive and harsh. It was quite evident to me that they had been drinking heavily; one or two of them could hardly stand up.

"Where are those cigarettes you promised to bring us, and which we paid you for?" asked one of them, truculently, and accompanying his question with beastly profanity and insult.

I was angry all through, of course, but of course I knew that beggars can't be choosers. If I had not kept my temper at this time, as I was forced to only too often later on, this story would probably never have been told. I pulled out the cigarettes and tobacco, which calmed them down again to some extent so that at last, thanking our stars, my boy and I kept on our way.

At the old Oak Tree we found the customary six on

guard, who were rather more decent to us. I gave them their supplies and a newspaper, together with the box of cigarettes I had brought for the Lieutenant. They promised to deliver them to him and asked at what time they might expect us the next day. I replied that they would see us some time between eleven and twelve, in all likelihood, and they told me that they would have some letters for me to mail in Paris.

After this we delivered a few letters in Lamorlaye, with a couple of papers, and hurried on to Gouvieux where we stopped at the Mairie's with the rest of the letters and more papers that were eagerly pounced upon.

When we reached our house my wife and daughter were overjoyed to see us again. They had, of course, worried somewhat less than on the first occasion, but the waiting was none the less somewhat anxious for them. Some of the villagers came, hurrying towards us, and congratulated us. The good old priest obtained one of the papers I had brought, and scanned it anxiously. His emotion was pitiful when he read that the Germans had invaded the little place where he was born and had been reared. He told us that his old parents still lived there, and he was beside himself with grief and the fear that they might have come to some harm. According to the news he read, and which was afterwards confirmed, the little village had been utterly destroyed by fire. The poor old

Curé tried for a moment to control his feelings, but the task was beyond his strength. He burst into tears, weeping like a stricken child. He was not alone in his grief, being so well loved that others, sympathizing with him, had to cry also.

The poor man left us, bowed down with sorrow, and went off to his church in which he disappeared. We only saw him again in the evening. He was still carrying that paper, nor would he allow any one to take it from him, although we had only two and many were anxious to read them. The last we saw of him that night he was still holding on to it as if it must be some sacred thing he couldn't part with.

I then rode my wheel off towards some places in the neighbourhood, to see how things had been progressing. I reached a château we knew as the "Old Mill," a place that had been recently refurnished and beautifully decorated. The doors had been thrown open and the sight, when I entered, was so revolting as to sicken me. All the furniture was absolutely shattered—a beautiful and costly bed was broken to bits—and nearly everything that would go through the windows had been thrown out, the wreckage strewing the ground. The outrages that had been committed would be beyond belief, had such beastliness not been repeated so far and wide throughout the invaded country that thousands upon thousands have seen such sights. Absolutely nothing had been left undone that

could mar the beauty of the splendid old place. And everywhere, in beds, on costly carpets half consumed, upon the walls, yes, and to the very ceiling, the swinish Huns had scattered and smeared and spattered their personal filth. Thus had they proclaimed the glory and "Kultur" of their sacrosanct Empire. Thus had they gloried in demonstrating their civilization and showing their contempts for the peoples of this world that are incapable of following such a lead in the upward march of humanity.

The sight had made me ill, and I returned, nauseated, to break the news to the villagers. One poor old man told me that he had passed that way on the previous evening. He had heard a tremendous noise within the gates of the château, while inside the yard there had been some twenty or thirty German soldiers. They had impressed him as being all more or less drunk, and he had hurried back to the church and told this to the people who had taken refuge in the old cave, imploring them to keep very still as there were a lot of Boches on the road to Chaumont who would certainly make trouble if they came this way. I hastened to my house and told this to my people. When my wife heard about the smashing up of all the beautiful things she broke down and cried like a child. This destruction was nothing short of a crime, a most useless and dastardly one, for no one had hindered them in any way and everything in the place was of

— 7 —

PERMIS DE SÉJOUR

DANS LA ZONE DES ARMÉES

ENREGISTRÉ SOUS LE N° 3179

1. *Valable jusqu'au* [illegible]

2. *Pour résider à* Gouvieux (rue de Chantilly N° 8, Oise)

Département [illegible]

Au Quartier Général, le 22 Mars 1916.

P. *Le Général Commandant*,

CACHET

DÉCLARATION DE RÉSIDENCE *faite :* à Gouvieux

ou

EXTRAIT DU REGISTRE d'Immatriculation *visé :* le 11 Décembre 1912.

ADRESSE (dans la localité où l'Étranger est autorisé à résider) Rue du Ciel N° 8

CACHET

VISA du COMMISSAIRE DE POLICE (ou du MAIRE)

G. Fleury

FRED MITCHELL'S PERMIT TO REMAIN IN THE WAR ZONE

nearly priceless value, since very few of the objects collected there could ever be restored or duplicated.

Such were the first real evidences of Hunnish refinement that I saw. These sights were soon to become only too familiar to me, unfortunately.

CHAPTER X

NECKS AGAIN IN JEOPARDY

AFTER supper I went again to the bakery, where I worked hard for about three hours, only stopping when I was utterly unable to stand to my work. I had but little rest that night, rising at five in the morning. Going to the kennels I busied myself, to the best of my ability, with some veterinary work needed by some dogs that had been quarantined. It soon became time for me to leave this off and go around for the letters I was to take to Paris. Every day, as more and more people kept hearing about my trips, the mail-pouch grew more voluminous.

We were off again at half past eleven, cheered by the brightly shining sun and hoping that it was an omen of good luck. In this I must say that we were disappointed, for it proved to be the worst of the journeys we had yet undertaken.

On the way to Lamorlaye I was halted by soldiers unacquainted with me, who inspected my bags and the letters. These were thrown contemptuously all over the road, after which they ordered us away. This squad of men acted towards us in such an ugly way

that we were glad indeed to escape from them with our lives. We rode on for a short distance but I kept looking back. The men disappeared in the woods and I decided to attempt to get those letters. Returning, I picked them up as fast as I could. They were not in very bad condition, as the weather was dry. They were only rather soiled but otherwise none the worse. I don't think I missed a single one.

This occurrence had not served to quiet our nerves very much, and poor Freddie was rather badly shaken, as I was also, to tell the truth. We had noticed that the manner of these men was most unfriendly and brutal and we feared that further trouble might be brewing. Nor were we disappointed in our expectation. That old Oak Tree always seemed to be a sort of Waterloo for us. We were absolutely sure to be stopped there and we wondered what was waiting for us this time.

About fifty of the Boches were on guard this time, with their rifles stacked up all around them. Their order to halt was shouted out fiercely, and they commanded us to go out into the woods, leaving our wheels on the ground. They marched us off for about two hundred yards—two men with fixed bayonets keeping all too close behind us. These men were so terribly truculent and rough that this time there was no doubt in our minds that this was the finish.

We were compelled to undress again, to the very last stitch this time—boots and stockings and everything. But of course they were unable to find anything. This simply seemed to aggravate their furious tempers till they were in a towering rage. The least thing might have made them use the weapons they were brandishing in our faces.

But here our lucky star shone again. A soldier who had come over a different road came near to see what was the matter. The fellow had seen us on other occasions and had received some cigarettes from us. At once he explained to the sergeant in charge of the squad that we were the men who had brought tobacco and other things to them from Paris. I had unfortunately, on this occasion, forgotten my "German Passport" and had been unable to identify myself to their satisfaction. But the luck held out. The man explained what I had done not only for the men but for the Colonel himself. As soon as they heard this they told us to put on our clothes again and go on our way. Thankfully we obeyed and at last made another start. We had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards or so when bullets whizzed by us and we heard five or six shots ringing out. Whether they meant to kill us or merely to frighten us I am sure I don't know, but they certainly accomplished the latter. A few hundred yards away we were stopped again, but these soldiers only wanted to

give us money to bring them back more cigarettes. It appears that one of the men at the post we had just left had been observing us through his glasses. When he saw that we had stopped and were receiving the money he leaped on his horse and came thundering after us. He asked the soldiers what they were doing and they explained the transaction. He was mollified at once.

"Oh! I didn't know that you would do that," he said, "or I should have asked you to bring me some."

Of course I had to say that I would be glad to oblige him, at which he looked rather surprised.

"Do you mean to say that you will do this in spite of the way we have treated you?" he asked.

As diplomatically as I could I answered that I supposed he had only been doing his duty in seeing that we were not engaged in anything that would be harmful to the troops.

"I'm glad you take it that way!" he stated.

To this I innocently answered that I could not see that there was any other way to take it, and he asked us to bring him five francs' worth of cigars and five packages of cigarettes. Before leaving us he asked us the usual question and we replied that we would be back on the following afternoon about four-thirty or five o'clock.

"I shall be on guard with five men and await your return," he told me. "But if anything should pre-

vent my doing so you can put the cigars and cigarettes, and some matches, in the hollow of this tree. Place three stones at the foot of the tree and then I will know that you have left them for me."

So we left him, able to breathe fairly freely again. When we reached Luzarches I asked my son if he wished to stop at the fountain for a drink of water. He answered that he was very thirsty and would like to do so. This was the first time that I had become really alarmed about the boy's condition. He was beginning to show very plainly how trying these ordeals had been for him, and was shaking all over, showing that his nerves were getting badly frayed. I had a small bottle in my saddle-bag, which contained a little port wine. I gave him a swallow of this and it seemed to revive him and brace him up to some extent. But he was still greatly excited:

"Oh, Dad!" he cried, "this is getting worse all the time!"

"We mustn't grumble, my boy," I told him. "We haven't been hurt yet."

He was very uneasy yet, however.

"What would have become of us if that officer hadn't arrived just in the nick of time?" he asked.

To this I could only answer that by this time we would be bound to meet some soldier who knew us, whenever we were stopped. I told him to remember that thus far we had got through safely each time and

that we had been very fortunate, seeing that I had forgotten the Colonel's "passport."

I had not missed the thing until we had been halted at the place where all our letters were scattered on the ground, and of course it had been too late to return for it, for we would have been compelled to get by the very same men again.

"The thing that worries me most," said my boy after a moment, "is to think that those brutes may have taken the road to our house. I wonder what would happen if they took it into their heads to search it and make trouble for mother and Florence?"

I tried to reassure him, but these words awakened in me a keen anxiety and I never ceased to worry over the matter during our trip to Paris and back.

On this occasion we hardly had any trouble at all in passing the French lines. We were allowed to go through without the slightest difficulty or delay, so that we reached our destination an hour or so before we had expected to. After my boy had eaten a good meal he looked ever so much better. If he felt revived, however, I was feeling worse every moment, as I kept constantly thinking of those men who had stopped us. They had been badly under the influence of liquor and I continued to worry over what road they might have taken after they had left us.

I had a lot to do in Paris, of course, and this kept me busy till dinner time. I decided to start two

hours earlier on the next day, since I had not been able to stop worrying. We did this and I was very glad of it, for, after passing the French lines, we were able to keep on at a good pace till we reached Luzarches. There we stopped to rest for about twenty minutes, eating our sandwiches and drinking from the fountain.

Resuming our journey we took the road down to Lamorlaye, but a short distance away. We remarked that it was strange that there seemed to be no Germans about the place, but suddenly we were halted by a revolver pointed at us, close to that ill-omened old Oak Tree. We were asked why we had stopped at the fountain and what we had been doing there. I explained how we had rested and had some lunch, but they ordered me to ride back there and bring two pails of water from the fountain. One of the soldiers jumped on my son's bicycle and accompanied me. He keenly watched me as I filled the pails. Then we returned and I was made to pour some of the water into a glass and drink it. When I had done this I had to sample the other pail, to show them that the water was all right. As they had seen us sitting by the fountain they had suspected us of tampering with it. As it was their best source of water-supply they had judged it best to experiment on me in order to see whether we had put poison in it.

After this I asked them whether the man to whom

I had promised to bring the cigars was around. They asked me to describe him and appeared to understand at once who I was referring to, saying that he would be back in about twenty minutes. They were rather uneasy at having troubled us about the water, while we were trying to do a favor to one of their comrades.

"Why didn't you tell us that you were bringing those cigarettes?" they asked. "Then we wouldn't have sent you back for that water."

My readers will understand that we were continually coming across new men. I presume that they were constantly being shifted from one post to another and this made it harder for us since it compelled us to explain matters over and over again.

The man we were waiting for finally turned up and looked angrily at me.

"Why didn't you do as I told you to?" he asked me, sharply.

"I couldn't," I answered. "These are not the same men who were here yesterday. They've made me go over to the fountain to get them water because they thought I'd poisoned it. If they had seen me rummaging around a tree they would have suspected something else. At any rate there would have been a chance that you might not get your cigarettes and cigars. Then you would have been pretty cross the next day."

This seemed to amuse him and he said that it was

all right. The soldiers were greatly surprised when they saw me hand over the tobacco and matches to this man.

"I think that's great," said one of them to the others. "We ought to be grateful to these fellows instead of treating them as we have done. They're the two whose letters we scattered on the road yesterday. I never recognized them at first."

It was a great sigh of relief I gave when I heard this, for now I could feel sure that they had not made the trip to Gouvieux as we had feared they would. I was glad indeed to find them in this place.

We were allowed to proceed and were soon able to leave letters and papers at Lamorlaye. I was still so upset, however, that I forgot to leave any newspapers for the Germans. We had pretty nearly reached Gouvieux when we met six lancers going at full gallop along the road. They paid no attention to us and would have been upon us had we not hurriedly pulled out into the field. Many of these, in France, have no hedges or fences, and the fruit trees grow sometimes right up to the side of the road. Those six lancers kept on at breakneck speed and dashed past us, never even glancing our way. After we had reached Gouvieux we were informed that there had been a considerable disturbance on the previous night. The men who were causing the trouble had been pounced upon by fifty men who had dashed up on bicycles. The

disturbers had been drinking, of course, but had fortunately done but little damage, excepting in one or two unoccupied houses.

Our family and friends were glad to see us, as usual, and we received the warmest welcome. They were delighted to have the newspapers and the latest information from Paris. We had only just managed to get through our supper and were longing for a little rest when peremptory orders came for more biscuits. The Boches were improving in the matter of appetite, it seems, for this time they wanted six hundred of them ready for the following evening. I wondered whether I would be expected to feed the fifty thousand who were on their way towards us, according to the Colonel's information.

"That's an awful job," I complained. "I scarcely feel equal to it, for I'm pretty nearly exhausted. It's too bad."

But biscuits were biscuits and by this time I was quite convinced that Germans were Germans. There was no remedy for this new trouble excepting to grin and bear it to the best of my ability. First, however, I felt absolutely compelled to rest for a couple of hours and have something to eat. This accomplished wonders for me, and my boy, who managed to get four hours' sleep, joined his mother and myself in this dreadful task of providing fodder for the Germans. By four o'clock in the morning we had five hundred

and fifty of those biscuits ready, so that I told my wife and son to leave and take their needed rest while I finished the job. By half past five I staggered off to bed and slept like a log till ten, when it was time to begin our preparations for another trip to Paris.

My wife was exceedingly nervous and excited that morning—she begged and begged me to give up or postpone my trip, and I had the hardest sort of time to overcome her objections. I have no doubt that she was affected by the dangers Freddie and I had been passing through, so that her nerves had come on edge. Our exhaustion, and the worried looks I suppose we sometimes bore, made her feel that she could not bear to have us leave. I certainly sympathized with her, but I was certain that it was most important for us to go, so that I finally prevailed on her to allow us to start.

We went around to collect our usual mail, after which our journey began. We managed to reach Lamorlaye before we were halted at some stables there. The Colonel came out and asked me how I was faring now. I told him that I had been all the way to Paris and back, several times, and explained to him how we had managed to get through, dwelling to some extent upon the treatment we had received in several places and more particularly at the Oak Tree. He looked rather angry at this, and said that he would accompany us on his horse as far as the tree. He

would find out why we had been so molested in spite of the card he had given us and give the men a talking to.

I begged him to say as little as possible about this. We had hitherto managed to scrape through safely and felt that it might be bad for us to incur the ill will of the soldiers by having them reprimanded. It might, I explained, cause us a lot of trouble in future. He listened to me, nodding, and seemed to think that these points were well taken. Riding at our side he covered the rest of the way to the tree, where he merely told the men that I was not to be interfered with in any way. They might examine anything I carried, he told them, but must return it to us. Also he ordered them never to strip us again, saying that it was quite unnecesary, and directed them never to delay us a moment longer than was absolutely necessary. He made it a point to tell them that if they wished any letters mailed or wished anything to be brought back to them he felt very sure that we would do our best to accommodate them.

For the first time we thus got by the Oak Tree without the sensation that we were getting pretty close to breathing our last. We started away confidently, feeling that everything was going splendidly for us now, and that in future we would doubtless be free to come and go as often as we wanted to and with very little hindrance.

Freddy and I rode along, feeling very safe and contented. The Colonel had branched off to the left, through the woods, after bidding us good-bye. Suddenly, after going but four or five hundred yards, we were peremptorily halted again and had to jump off in haste.

CHAPTER XI

A COUNTRY AFLAME

A NUMBER of German soldiers were blocking the road. Harshly they ordered us to get on one side of it. As we were obeying this order we saw a half a dozen men kneeling on the grass that grew up to the highway. With left elbows resting on the left knee they were taking aim. I swiftly peered ahead. By the fountain at Luzarches was a French soldier dismounted from a horse. They were both drinking, unsuspectingly. Suddenly the shots rang out. I saw the horse rear a little and fall head first across the tank and then roll over. The man's hands appeared to be uplifted just a little and he sank, falling backwards. For an instant the horse's feet shook convulsively. Then both were utterly still in death, while the Germans cheered and danced about in delight.

"You can go now," one of them told us, "but don't you dare turn your heads when you get by the fountain. Ride straight on unless you want to be shot also."

We were badly shaken by this sight, especially my boy Freddie. It was the first sudden death he had

seen, and he was trembling as we mounted again and rode along, passing by the fountain but never looking at what lay beside it.

After this we met with no hindrance whatever, saving the obstructions on the roads after getting into the French lines. We reached Paris in good season, attended to our errands, and after spending the night at my brother-in-law's, as usual, we started back the next day.

Our loads were heavy ones on this trip, for the amount of mail had been increasing and we carried a large amount of tobacco in various forms, besides packages containing tea, cocoa, and other provisions that were utterly lacking in our villages. We started at about eleven and in good time reached Luzarches, where we were sickened when we still saw the horse and the poor soldier lying on the ground. A few minutes before reaching the fountain one or two inhabitants had called to us, saying that we must on no account touch them or even look at them, for many Germans were about.

With heavy hearts we rode past this spot without stopping for our usual drink of cool water, and expected to come across some of the soldiers at any moment. Close to the Oak Tree we dismounted, feeling sure that we would be called on to do so. To our surprise, however, no one seemed to be about, and we walked beside our wheels for some time,

thinking that the men must be in the woods close by and might think that we wanted to ride past without obtaining their consent. The place seemed to be deserted, however, and after walking on for a few hundred yards we mounted our bicycles again and went along slowly till we reached Lamorlaye. We delivered the letters and papers we had for this village. My wife had asked me to bring a New York *Herald* with me as she wanted to read it, and I had a couple of copies.

In Gouvieux we went through the usual delivering of letters and messages, after which we went home. As always our friends were anxiously awaiting our return and clamoured for the latest news. I gave a copy of the New York *Herald* to my wife and she was delighted to obtain it, since it always had much fuller news about England than were published in the French papers. In this issue there was a good deal about the way in which Belgium was bravely holding out, and statements to the effect that the French were fighting like demons.

On the following morning the Colonel came to my house and asked me if I had heard anything about how matters were going in Belgium. When I told him that I could let him have a paper he said that he could not understand why I didn't get some English ones. My son Freddie was standing near at this moment. With boyish imprudence he spoke right out:

"Why, Dad, we have that New York *Herald* that we brought along yesterday."

I was rather provoked at his volunteering this information, but I did my best not to show it.

"Perhaps the Colonel would like to see it," said the boy again, running into the house and coming out with the paper. The Colonel at once threw the bridle of his horse to one of the men and leaned against the wall, scanning the pages hurriedly.

I shall never forget the expression that his face assumed when he suddenly came across the news that General French's "contemptible little army" had landed in Belgium. His hand, holding the paper, fell to his side, and he slowly turned to me.

"Mitchell," he said in a low voice, "the German nation is doomed. England has turned against us."

The paper dropped from his hand, unheeded. At this moment a little boy two or three years of age, who had been playing in the street and whom I was great friends with, came running up to me. He looked up at the Colonel, with childish assurance, and the latter picked him up in his arms. The little one's mother had been watching us. When she saw her baby taken up she fell to the ground in a dead faint, thinking that the baby would be killed. But the Colonel kissed it and put him down again, gently, and turned to me:

"I have four of them at home—like this," he said, indicating with his hand their various sizes. "I think that I shall never see them again, now that Great Britain has joined France."

Then a look of obstinate determination came over him and his voice grew harsher. It may be that he was ashamed of having shown that there was a sentimental side to his nature. At any rate he turned again to me, brusquely, and asked if I had any biscuits.

I explained that we had not made any during the night as we had been too exhausted on our return, and told him that as we were not going to Paris on the next day we would be able to bake a lot more.

"I have your cigars," I added. "Would you like to take them now?"

He said that he would take them at once and paid me for them in German money. After this he asked if he might take the *Herald* with him, and of course I told him he was welcome to it. He said that he would try to look me up on the following day, and that he would send some of his men over for the biscuits. He urged me to have as many ready as I could bake. Then he leaned back against the wall again, wearily:

"Look here, Mitchell, you had better keep quiet about the English," he told me. "Something might happen to me—I may be called away from this district at a moment's notice. I've been telling the men

that you were an American jockey. They don't know the difference. Don't show those papers to any one and be sure to keep that card I gave you."

I told him that I appreciated his kindness and he informed me that he would see me soon again. Before leaving he asked me if I could get him a bottle of beer—English beer preferred. As I had a few left I told him that I would, and that I could let him have a little cheese if he cared to have some with the beer. This was gratefully accepted. A poor old man who kept the barber shop in Gouvieux came over with a bottle of red wine and handed it to the four men who were with the Colonel. They thanked him profusely. After he had finished his beer our friend wished us good day and rode off.

I may state here that the old barber I have spoken of was so terribly agitated when he heard about the fifty thousand Germans who were coming our way that the shock proved too great for him and he dropped dead.

I did not go to Paris the next day, having decided that we needed a rest badly. The Colonel, with about sixty men, passed through the village and told me that he would send eight of them later on for as many biscuits as I had been able to make ready. He hinted that it probably was the last time that we should be called on to furnish them.

I didn't quite know what this portended, and I

wondered at what changes might be about to take place. I had noticed a strange new officer with the Colonel—a man far more abrupt and cold. I was very greatly perplexed, because the Colonel spoke to me more harshly than he ever had before, but finally concluded that he had done so owing to the presence of this other man.

On that afternoon I rode over to Chantilly, where I was informed that there had been a second visit from the Crown Prince. In fact, he had been there on that very morning. His visits had produced profound disquiet among the people, who were greatly worried by them.

In the Grande Rue I found that the tobacco shop had been smashed up. Everything had been torn out of it and the doors and windows broken or unhinged. As I turned to go down towards the Mairie I saw a large group of German soldiers. They were important looking fellows—dressed up in tremendously elaborate uniforms. But I took good care not to venture near them. I feel quite certain, though I cannot be absolutely sure, that this was the Crown Prince and his staff making ready to leave. They were apparently bound in the direction of Senlis. When they had finally moved away I went over to the Mairie and delivered a note there, after which I returned home. I was kept busy with the dogs in my kennels for some time. The poor things were badly

in need of attention since we were forced to neglect them a little. When this was done I went back to the bakery to work over the biscuits, a job to which there never seemed to be an end.

On the following day we started again for Paris. To our amazement we never met a single German. At Luzarches we thought it might still be unsafe to stop to examine the soldier and horse who were still lying on the ground. They had been there for five days now. We reported the matter to the first officials we came to on our road to Paris.

We reached St. Denis quite early, since we had met no hindrance whatever saving the blocked roads. We had something to eat in the *café* and made the rest of the journey by tramway. As we got into Paris we were impressed by a feeling that something was about to happen. The people looked restless and excited. Rumours were current everywhere that a tremendous German attack was imminent. The officials questioned me closely as to their whereabouts and I gladly gave them all the information I possessed. I also told them that by this time the Germans were doubtless on the march towards Senlis.

Next morning we left very early. On arriving at Luzarches we were greatly relieved to find that the dead man and horse had been removed. We dismounted and got a drink of water at the fountain and then rode on quite fast until we reached the Oak Tree.

We got off our machines—perhaps through sheer force of habit more than for any other reason, and looked around us, peering through the woods. They were quite deserted, however. At the foot of a tree I came across a German bayonet that had been left there, and tied it to my machine in order to take it home as a souvenir. Just before we reached Lamorlaye we noticed a great many people coming towards us, from the direction of Chantilly and Gouvieux. We knew that this signified trouble somewhere. When we reached them they sought to persuade us to turn back, crying out that Senlis, Creil and very likely Chantilly were in flames. But this did not stop us and we hurried on, leaving our messages at Lamorlaye. There had been but a very few inhabitants left in this place, but even the small remnant there was seemed to be preparing to flee.

On the way to Gouvieux we again met a good many people, all of whom looked badly frightened and warned us against going on.

At last we reached home and my wife cried out to me:

"Oh, Fred! come quickly in the back paddock!"

As I did so I could see great flames rising in a cloud of yellowish, sulphurous-looking smoke that soon reached our village, emitting an oily stench. Estimating the distance of this conflagration at about three miles or so in a straight line, I thought that it was in

Senlis. Nor was I mistaken. To the left of this was Creil, and this town was also a mass of flames. My wife was in a frenzy of fear.

"Our turn will come next!" she cried to me in despair.

"No, no, don't worry," I urged her. "I'm sure we'll be all right. Make every preparation to remain in the cave tonight. There you will be perfectly safe. There can be no danger there."

There was a tremendous rumbling of heavy guns going on, but the enemy was not being attacked and I never found out just what it meant. For aught I know they may have been at some sort of practice.

That evening we made every preparation to be out of sight in case any soldiers came our way. Throughout the long night the smoke hung heavily over the surrounding country, in a huge cloud slowly borne by the wind and travelling down the valley from Senlis and Creil. I never closed an eye that night. Sleep was out of the question.

Over a score of our poor villagers had joined us there. Tottering old women wept, prayed, told their beads endlessly. Old men were the picture of despair. All thought that the end was coming. During the livelong night there was a low chorus of suffering moans, of expressions of despair. Little children cried and fell asleep again, but I doubt if any of the older people managed even to doze.

I could not remain in there constantly, and a number of times I came out. The night did not seem very dark. I believe that the moon was shining. A tremendous glare lightened the sky in the direction of the ill-fated towns. The smoke still hung over everything, like a fog.

And so that terrible night wore on.

CHAPTER XII

THE COLONEL IS CAPTURED—THE BATTLE

At about two o'clock I had gone out of the cave again, feeling so restless that I could not remain long in one position. For a short time I listened to an immense roaring sound that had arisen to the northward. A mighty struggle was beginning, undoubtedly, and I hurried back into the cave to inform the weary people of this. Most of them came out.

The buildings nearest to us seemed to be shaking with the tremendous commotion, even at this distance. Mortar was falling off from the ancient walls and windows were broken by this bombardment, which rose and fell in great waves of sound. The force of it was terrific and even the ground on which we stood appeared to tremble under our feet and to make our bodies vibrate with it. Far down the valley we could see great blasts of fire that were spat out by the cannons far down the valley.

This, we found out later, was the beginning of the great battle of Chamont, which lasted several days. It was a terrific one, attended with immense slaughter

and the repulse of an enemy that had deemed himself master of the great city by the Seine. It was at this time that a swiftly moving and endless procession of automobiles, trucks, auto-busses and everything else that could carry men swiftly, had poured out of Paris under orders of Gallieni. Too much has already been written about this great and decisive move to make it necessary for me to speak about it further. The force so rapidly transported cut off those fifty thousand Germans whose invasion we had been threatened with, and who had been swiftly marching towards Paris. How many dead strewed the fields and woods after it I cannot say. They were everywhere.

For several days the battle continued. At times the firing seemed to fade away, as if the guns had been pushed farther from us, and again the din of it all would grow stronger until it seemed to arise within a very short distance of us. At last, however, the sounds began to grow dimmer till they seemed to come from a good many miles away. The enemy had been driven back.

I had seen no one from the Mairie for a couple of days, although I had gone over there several times. When I happened to go there the officials must have been engaged elsewhere. A very pandemonium was going on; every one was excited and most of us were frightened half to death.

On about the fourth day of the battle we began to

see aeroplanes darting over our villages, and there was done some wonderful work by the French and German fliers. They were seldom near enough to allow of our distinguishing their nationality. All that we could see was that they were engaged in hot fights. We could look from the window of my room and see them plainly, sometimes three or four kilometres away. It was fearful and yet fascinating to watch them, as first one and then another would be stopped in its flight, swaying or seeming to turn somersaults, and then crashing down. Right above us one of these battles took place, which our eyes followed for a long time. At last we were able to see clearly that two machines were German while one was French. The two first came directly over our little town, with the third following them closely. I estimated the distance at no more than two or three hundred yards. The Frenchman was pursuing them. As this went on several shells fell in the back part of my paddocks and burst there so that I felt terribly alarmed about the dogs. The Germans continued to flee as their foe kept on chasing them, in spite of the heavy odds. Those French chaps are plucky fellows indeed.

A few days later we resumed our journeys to Paris, for we were constantly in need of supplies for ourselves and the poor people I was trying to look out for. On the road terrified men would run toward us

and ask us where the fighting was. The roar of it could be heard as far back as the outskirts of Paris—about twenty-three or twenty-four miles away. They appeared to be rather astonished that I was not more upset and frightened about it, but by this time I had really become accustomed to the terrific din of it all and knew that the fighting was gradually taking place further away.

When I told all this to my brother-in-law, and explained how close to us the battle had raged, he did his best to prevail upon me to bring my family at once to Paris. When I returned home on the next morning I was surprised to find that a great many German soldiers who had been stationed in the neighbouring districts and villages were returning through Gouvieux. They did not molest me, however, appearing to feel none too secure themselves, and I went at once to the Mairie and delivered my letters and various commissions I had undertaken for them. I was eagerly asked for the latest news from Paris, and told him that everything and every one was in a turmoil there. On the way home I came across the Colonel and he hurried to me also for news. When I told him how excited and worried every one was in the city he looked at me, shaking his head.

"So are we," he acknowledged to me. "It looks now as if we must be cut off and I am beginning to think that we shall never get back to our lines. Those

of my men who are off towards the front may do so, but I'm afraid a lot of us can never get back to our army."

The man looked very discouraged, although I could see that he had no sense of personal fear. I will say that he was a brave man and merely affected by the knowledge that things were going very badly for him and the rest of the German hosts.

I had been walking with him towards the Mairie, having turned back after I met him. He was asked to enter the place and complied with the request, leaving his man outside. A terrible surprise awaited him. No sooner was he in the room than he was surrounded and ordered to give up his arms. Resistance was useless and he was told that he was a prisoner. His man was also brought in and secured.

In order to try and console him I told him that now he would at any rate see his wife and children at some future date.

"I know that this is your doing," he replied to me.

I replied that it was not, and that I hoped it was all for the best. Before he left, in charge of some "Pompiers," as the firemen are called, I thanked him for the kindness he had shown to me and to my family, as well as to the poor people of this and neighbouring villages, but he merely replied that all was fair in war.

I have never seen him since. In spite of his being

a German I have none but pleasant feelings towards him. Alone among his regiment of brutish and uncouth men he had acted as a man and a gentleman. It is possible that his long residence in France and England had given him a better polish than is usually possessed by his kind. I was able to do a great deal for him while he commanded in our place, though whatever I did was practically forced upon me, but he recognized it civilly and treated the people humanely on the whole. I know that he must often have been hard put to it to restrain the beastly brutality of his rough and drunken horde.

I returned home, slowly, and told my wife what had happened. She was delighted to hear that the Colonel had been made a prisoner, saying that she was glad he was now safe from harm since he had been so good to the poor people in all our little villages.

For a number of days some of the men who had been with the Colonel kept turning up, half starved and badly frightened. They had thrown their guns and other weapons in the river and were only too anxious to give themselves up. It may well be realized that their demeanour had undergone a considerable change. They had a hunted, shame-faced look, and their harsh and brutal voices were considerably lowered when they spoke at this time.

Some of these soldiers, however, were still left in the woods. They pilfered and stole, and molested

some of the villagers, entering the dwellings furthest from the villages and helping themselves with abundance of threats.

The Pompiers, or fire-brigade, who, in France, are practically organized as a part of the military establishment, came over from Paris in automobiles to clear these stragglers out. Six of these firemen came through Gouvieux and overtook me as I was riding my bicycle, bound for Chantilly. They stopped to ask me if I had seen any Germans and I told them I had met none of them that morning. They warned me to keep a good distance behind their car, as they expected that at any time there might be some firing of rifles. Unless I was on my guard, they told me, I might be hurt. Of course I followed out their instructions to the letter. After they entered Chantilly the firemen turned, at the cross-roads, into the Avenue de la Gare. I stopped for some minutes at the intersection, wondering whether anything was going to happen, and then went off towards the Mairie, along the Grande Rue. But as I turned into the latter I saw four Uhlans trotting abreast towards me. Their horses seemed badly spent. Two of the men had lost their caps during their flight. Taking all in all they looked as if they had been getting considerably the worst of whatever skirmish they had been into. I jumped off my machine and stood watching them,

THE AUTHOR'S SON

thinking that trouble might come soon. One of them, as he passed me, snarled harshly at me:

"What the devil are you looking at?"

At this I turned to go on. These men would surely have done me some harm had they not been hurrying in flight. After they had gone a short distance I turned again, impelled by my curiosity, and walked a little way in the direction they had taken. As I was doing this they turned into the Avenue de la Gare. I could hear the clattering of the horses over the paving-stones. When they reached the cross-roads the shooting began. The firemen opened fire on them. They apparently missed the Uhlans, although they brought down two of the horses, whose riders picked themselves up and fled. The other two leaped off their mounts also and scattered off. One of them ran into a small *café* whose owners had fled, leaving a young son of theirs who had insisted on remaining to look after the place. The poor lad was a hunchback. When the Uhlan tore into the place the boy was so frightfully scared that he dropped dead.

Another one of the fleeing men went into the grounds of the Hotel Condé, while the other two fled into the woods. The firemen hunted for them a long time, seeking out every place they might have crept into and searching the woods for them. The house in which the boy had died was looked over, time and

again, but the Uhlan must have dashed out through the back door. No trace was ever found of these men; once in the deep woods they were comparatively safe, since these extended for miles and miles around. Tracking them in the thick forest was out of the question.

I returned home as soon as I could, leaving the firemen still searching and by no means pleased at the result of their ambush. On the following day Freddie asked me if we couldn't go as far as Chamont. By this time, although we could still hear heavy firing, the battle lines had been pushed back a dozen or fifteen miles, and the undertaking appeared to be a fairly safe one. I consented to go with him and have a look at that part of the country. After breakfast we went as far as Creil, riding by the side of the river Oise on the tow-path. As soon as we reached the river we had been compelled to cross it on a small boat in order to reach the path on the other side. The old man who owned the craft came out of his house. Freddie was looking at the river. Suddenly he threw up his hands in horror.

"Look at them, Dad," he cried. "Look at all the bodies!"

I could see them, all the way up and down the river, floating along slowly with the current. There seemed to be hundreds and hundreds of them.

"Yes," said the old man when I spoke of this ter-

rible sight, "they've been coming for a very long time, and so many of them."

As we rowed across, the old fellow had to turn in his seat, from time to time, to see that he did not collide with one of them. I asked him if they were all Germans, and he answered that he had seen no others. But his advanced age and failing sight may possibly have deceived him. To us it seemed as if they wore the German field-gray, but the water and weeds and mud had played havoc with them, and we had no stomach for careful investigation. For six kilometres we rode beside the river, and hardly ever were we out of sight of these floating and rolling bodies. As we reached Creil, having been concealed by the steep embankment, we suddenly found ourselves fifty or sixty yards away from some Germans who were standing close to the bridge watching others who were working on it, trying to restore some sort of crossing.

Immediately I whispered to Freddie to jump off and get into a *café* that was very near, telling him not to look at the Germans. We entered the place and the owner asked us what we desired. I told him that we would have some Chantilly water, which he gave us. I watched the Germans through the window, fearing they might molest us. We had taken the wheels in the house and pushed them out of a door at the back, which offered us a chance of getting away with-

out being seen. As we drank, the owner went and stood in the doorway.

"Look at the dirty pigs over there," he told us.

The Germans never could have heard him, of course. I had noticed that they had been keeping their eyes on him. Suddenly one of them lifted up his rifle and, with quick aim, shot him dead. They had seen us go in, of course, and probably could make us out through the windows. At any rate another shot rang out, the bullet crashing through the glass.

"Drop down!" I cried to Freddie, and we both did so as quick as a flash. Other bullets had swiftly followed the first ones. Whether or not they thought we had dropped down dead I don't know, nor can I say whether they came over to see. Creeping on hands and knees we had quickly gone out of the back door and mounted our wheels, pedalling away for dear life. We thought ourselves lucky indeed to have escaped.

Such wanton killing was not a solitary example of the German mode of treating the inhabitants. These murders took place constantly, for any reason or for no reason at all but the lust for shedding blood.

We journeyed on towards Senlis, which took us a long way around, but we were compelled to take this course in order to try to avoid meeting any more Huns. We deemed ourselves fortunate indeed at having escaped, for the shave had been a narrow one.

Freddie had been terribly scared, but probably not more so than I. He appeared to be becoming used to such happenings, however, for presently he laughed and remarked that we had been very clever to miss those shots.

"It was a near thing," he concluded. "We've been in a little bit of war, haven't we, Dad?"

The boy seemed to be pleased at the idea that he would have a lot to tell to his cousin, Bob Peacock.

Finally we reached Senlis, and the awful devastation was such that we could scarce believe our eyes. Part of the town had been bombarded. Later on the Germans had come into the place and, with their incendiary torches, had fired every house in the town. Most of the inhabitants had fled before their coming. Of the old and feeble that had remained few indeed were spared. Many of them were burnt to death in their houses or suffocated in the cellars where they had taken refuge. A few were still alive, however, and some had returned. In the streets were still some bodies, lying crushed beneath fallen walls. There were a good many corpses of Germans there, as well as those of French civilians.

We had to clamber over obstructions of all sorts on our way through the streets. A few poor old people were grubbing among the ruins, weeping. The roadways were piled not only with fallen brick and stone and mortar, but there was a large amount of broken

glass, bits of shattered furniture and other things too numerous to mention. No cataclysm of nature could have wrought more complete devastation, and none but Germans would have been capable of it. As we went on we came across an old English friend of mine, who had once been a jockey. He was glad to see us and related some hair-raising tales in regard to the siege he had been through. He mentioned a man I used to know very well—a Mr. S——, whose parents lived in Gouvieux.

"S. had a revolver," my friend told me. "He swore that he would shoot the first German who put his foot in the town. Six of them entered it and stopped at the Mairie. Then they went on and came up to the *café* he owned. I suppose he was crazed with anger, for he shot as soon as they came near, but never hit any of them. The Germans turned around, riding off helter-skelter back to the Mairie, where they told their officers what had happened. Immediately about forty men were sent over to surround the *café* and take the man prisoner. Four others were in there at the time, and they were also pounced upon. Then the Huns marched back to the Mairie, where the Mayor and his three deputies were taken. On the way to the *café* the soldiers happened to meet a few more civilians, who were forced to join the others. These prisoners were marched off to Chamont, where they were placed in a row in a field.

They shot the Mayor, and Mr. S. and the Mayor's secretary and were about to kill the others when a messenger came to say that these might be allowed to go free. The Mayor's body was buried with such a light covering of earth that it was scarcely hidden. The others were left as they had fallen.

Many other tales of horror our old friend told us, and assured us that everything that was of any value in the town had been looted and taken away before the place had been set on fire. It was no deed of angered or drunken soldiery, but the systematic destruction that was part and parcel of Hunnish warfare. Mr. S.'s *café* had been utterly cleared of everything in it that was fit to drink, as had every similar place in the town. In fact, he told us, the Germans after reaching the road beyond Senlis on the way to Chamont, had piled up bottles on both sides of the highway, for a distance of over two miles, representing loot taken from cellars and houses and drinking-shops of all the towns and villages and hamlets they had been through.

That he was telling us the exact truth I am absolutely convinced. The wines and liqueurs and beer had disappeared, of course, by the time we went on, but the heaps upon heaps of broken glass at the sides of the road spoke eloquently of the orgies that must have taken place.

After leaving my old friend and reaching Chamont

I went to see an old English caretaker. When we found him I asked how he had fared during the invasion and he declared that it had been so horrible that he was still hardly able to believe that he was alive. His memories of it all seemed like evil dreams. He told me how he and his wife had been in the Grand Château when the German troops had first arrived, about eight or nine o'clock in the evening. His wife heard the barking of some of the dogs and said that they were making an unusual amount of noise. She advised him to go out and see what the matter was. But he had told her that some one was probably trying to get a pheasant or a rabbit from the neighbouring coverts, and that, in view of the existing conditions, it wasn't worth bothering about.

In a very few minutes the bell rang. He answered the summons and as he opened the door a revolver was pointing at his breast. Four officers were standing there who asked him at once what he was doing there, to which he replied that he was the caretaker of the château. Their next question was whether there were any wines at hand, and he was ordered to deliver the keys of the cellars. He directed them to the place where the wine was kept. When they came back, laden with all the bottles they could carry, he was ordered to go with his wife over to a little cottage the two occupied when the masters were at home.

In order to comply with this order they had to walk

down an avenue that passed through the grounds. They saw a number of men walking about under the trees. Fearing for their lives, the two ran back to the château and rang the bell at a side door. One of the officers answered and the old man asked him if he could not be given some protection as far as his cottage, as the roadway was full of soldiers. The officer blew a whistle and two men appeared at once, who escorted the caretaker and his wife to the cottage. But when they reached this they were amazed to find that not a thing had been left in it—all the tables, sideboards, beds and chairs, with everything else the place contained, had been piled up in the road. So the only thing they could do was to go over to the pheasantry, which was about five hundred yards away. In this place he used to prepare food for his young pheasants. There was an old sofa there and he made up a bed for himself and his wife, as best he could. They baked some sort of bread for themselves out of the meal that was used in feeding the birds. But for this, indeed, they would have been compelled to starve.

On the following night he decided to see whether he could not manage to get a rabbit so that his wife could make a stew of it. This he could do in silence by placing small pocket-nets in runways and driving the game in them. After he had made his way clear across the park he was startled to come across an

English soldier. To his questions the Tommy replied that he was trying to poach a rabbit or two, so that he might have a change in his diet. Then he asked the soldier if he knew that there were more than fifty thousand German soldiers, hardly a mile and a half away. At this the soldier had laughed, declaring that such a thing was utterly impossible. The old man then explained all about the arrival of the Germans and how they had come to the castle and had taken possession of his quarters. This, with the sincerity of his manner, finally persuaded the soldier that it was the truth. He asked the caretaker to come with him to see his officer, to which he had gladly assented. The interview lasted a long while, as he gave all the information he had and answered many questions. The news was passed on to some French soldiers that had arrived from Paris during the night.

The caretaker was directed to return to his pheasantry at once and to bar his doors and make himself as safe as he could. He was also warned not to venture out till they came to release him. The night on which this happened was the one which I have spoken of in telling of the terrific bombardment.

So the caretaker returned and locked himself up. The frightful din that arose seemed to shake the earth and caused the place in which they were to sway so that they felt as if they were being rocked in a boat in a heavy sea. His wife held on to him, beside her-

self with terror. They had been compelled to stay in the pheasantry for a couple of days.

Some English soldiers, remembering that he was there, came over and told him he might come out. By this time the château was in the hands of the French and English, the former being in by far the greater number. He was questioned by these officers and gave them all the information he could.

As he had come up to the house the sight that met his eyes was a heart-rending one. In the brief time the Germans had held the place they had thrown out every bit of valuable furniture, which they had piled up and set on fire. Within the house every mirror was shattered. The glassware was smashed up, covering the floors, curtains had been pulled down and torn to pieces. Everywhere also there were signs that a drunken orgy had occurred. It was such a scene of pillage and destruction that for days it had sickened him. He had gone to work to try and restore a little order to the place, and save a few things that had not been irretrievably destroyed. In spite of his toil, however, the place still was in the most terrible condition.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE WAKE OF THE STORM

During the course of our talk with the caretaker and several others I was impressed by the fact that the aviators had rendered marvellous service in helping to bring about the defeat of the Huns. Back to Paris, when the fifty thousand Germans had come near, they had flown and spread the news, giving the enemy's exact locations and enabling the mass of recruits that had been in training to be sent forward immediately to the places most in need of their assistance. When the German aviators saw these reinforcements coming they doubtless thought it was a great army being sent against them, and this proved an important factor in their retreat, for they outnumbered greatly the force hurled against them.

The strong drink everywhere pilfered by the Huns surely contributed also to their undoing. They had been engaged in monstrous orgies to celebrate their forthcoming entrance into Paris, since they were absolutely persuaded that this was only a matter of a few days. From all that I heard and as a result of my own observation here and elsewhere I know that an

appalling number of the Germans must have been besotted and helpless with drink, a commentary upon the famed and wonderful discipline of the Kaiser's troops. Their officers were unable to stop these orgies and, as a matter of fact, a large number of them were in just as beastly a condition as their soldiers. Lest this may be disbelieved I firmly assert that drunken officers of the German army were then and later on a common sight to me. This, undoubtedly, also had a good deal to do with bringing success to the wonderful little army of France.

I asked the caretaker whether he had picked up any relics or souvenirs of the great combat, but he told me he had been altogether too busy with other matters to permit of his hunting for such things, after the repulse, and that while fifty thousand Germans had been about him the occupation of a collector would have been altogether an unhealthy one.

"But we have plenty of souvenirs in this place," he told me, pointing with his finger, "and we would spare them willingly. In that little garden of mine there are between two hundred and two hundred and fifty of those Germans buried. But if you want souvenirs you only need take a walk over the fields. You can pick up all you want in a minute."

Freddie and I were becoming thirsty and we could not obtain a drink of water, for the Huns, in pursuance of their civilized mode of warfare, had poisoned

all the wells on departing. We bade the man good-bye and turned about, going a little distance down the road on a general tour of investigation. The sights that met us can never be forgotten as long as we live. Near the château, in the main avenue, were the huge piles of half consumed wreckage of the furniture wantonly set ablaze by these Vandals. Further on, in the fields, along hedges and fences, at the side of the highways, the ground was strewn with German bodies. Evidence of their besotted condition was as clear as daylight. Some of them had no boots on, others were but half clad, while some were practically naked. They could have offered little resistance to the gallant young troops that swept over them in their dash towards the scene of the heaviest fighting. It was a ghastly and sickening spectacle.

We proceeded a little farther on and were rather surprised to see eight people coming towards us and leading or driving some horses and carts. They had come for the sad purpose of disinterring the murdered Mayor and giving him decent burial at Senlis. I chanced to be acquainted with one of these men, who happened to have heard all about our trips to Paris and the work I had been able to do for the poor villagers about Gouvieux and Chantilly. He was very pleased to introduce us to his companions, who told us how glad and proud they felt that we had succeeded in accomplishing so much.

"If you had been in Senlis," said one of them, "our poor town might perhaps have been also saved."

I explained that we had been greatly aided by the fact that the officer in charge of our district had been a good acquaintance of mine before the war, and that this accounted for the fact that our villages had escaped the destruction practised wholesale all around us.

Leaving these people we started back for Chantilly and home. Passing through St. Leonard we met a party of six German soldiers who had made their escape from troops and searching parties. They asked us where we were going, with a mildness of manner accounted for by the fact that they no longer deemed themselves conquering heroes. They asked us where we were going and I informed them that we were bound for Chantilly.

"Oh, we know that place! Will you show us the way?"

We gave them the necessary directions. These fellows had thrown away their guns. Nor do I believe that they had even retained their revolvers. A sick and weary-looking squad they were, to be sure.

Freddie and I kept on towards Gouvieux, and as soon as we reached it we went to the Mairie and described our trip and the terrible sights we had witnessed, endeavouring to explain how matters stood with the poor people in the sections that had been on

the main lines of battle. The men we spoke to were utterly appalled by all that we told them, yet I hardly believe they could have realized the extent of the destruction and the fierceness of the conflict without seeing, as we had, the aftermath of all those horrors.

When we returned home we found that my wife was terribly excited, having begun to believe that we should never return. She knew, of course, that we had only meant to cover a few miles, and could not account for our long absence. I sought to say very little about our experiences and especially about the narrow shave of the morning, but Freddie was too much of a boy to keep still very long. When his mother and sister heard about it they were nearly distracted. My wife looked reproachfully at me, and told the boy that I was utterly hopeless and would probably keep on taking chances till I was killed. At last she became calmer and expressed her thankfulness that the frightful destruction had stopped short of our poor little villages. Much as we had suffered we certainly had dwelt in an oasis, compared with the desolation of our surroundings.

On the following morning we could still hear the distant and continuous roar of guns by the hundreds and thousands. So used to it were we, by this time, that now and then we no longer noticed it. I discovered that my boy had made arrangements to accompany another boy friend of his as far as the quarries,

where they thought they might obtain a view of the great battle with the aid of field-glasses.

Fortunately Freddie asked his mother's permission, which she promptly and firmly refused. He was not quite satisfied with this and made up his mind to come and ask me. Immediately I put my foot down hard and forbade him to go any further away than the church.

About an hour later my wife cried out to me as I was going up the street.

"See what you have done by allowing Freddie to go off with that boy," she sobbed. "They tell me that a young lad has been shot on the road to Chomour!"

She was beside herself with grief, feeling perfectly certain that our son had been the victim. I denied that I had given my permission for him to go, and naturally felt very anxious at this news. A few minutes later, however, I was surprised and delighted to see Freddie coming around the church and leading a pony harnessed to a small covered cart. We found out that its occupants had left early in the day, going in the direction of St. Maximin, and that they had been held up suddenly by Germans and forced to stop. Four of these poor people had been in the cart. One of them was a boy of about seventeen and the others were his mother and sister and an old grandmother. Such a helpless lot must have offered a great temptation indeed to the Huns. The brutes

lined up the poor trembling victims and shot them. The boy was killed instantly, with his sister and mother. The old woman was left lying in a pool of blood beside the others, severely wounded. Of a similar nature were uncountable doughty deeds of arms tending to show the Kultur of the Kaiser's mighty warriors.

The dead were taken away and the old woman sent off to a hospital. On the very next day a second outrage occurred.

A man who lived not far from my house owned a small cottage at St. Maximin but had been stopping with his daughter, who was married and whose husband was away at the front. He decided to take his horse and cart and go over to see what condition his cottage was in. When he was at the entrance of the village he noticed a body lying on the road, whereupon he got out of the cart and looked at the victim. He was quite unable to recognize him, only being able to see that it was a very young boy. The boots and everything else the little fellow wore had been stripped from him. The man went as far as his gate and looked at his cottage, returning as fast as possible. When he came to the body again he could not bear to see the poor little nude thing thus exposed and covered it over with dead leaves. As soon as he reached Gouvieux he came to me and reported the occurrence, whereupon I hurried over to the Mairie

and related what he had told me. As soon as we could we procured a horse and cart, in which we placed the body and brought it back with us. We brought it back to the Mairie, but it had been so abused that there was no means of identifying it. We sent word to the mother of the boy who had been around to our house that morning, asking her whether her boy had gone off to see the firing by himself. Freddie, we knew, was at home, and we feared the other lad had ventured off alone. We could not be sure, but were fearing that the poor little fellow might be her son. When she first arrived at the Mairie, frantic with anxiety, she was at first unable to identify the child. When she lifted up the left hand, however, she knew that the worst had happened. Some years previously the boy had lost a little finger.

To make very sure of their task the murdering Huns had shot him twice and stabbed him three times with their bayonets. Yes, it must be admitted that they are thorough when a dastardly crime is to be committed. The men had taken away the bicycle and every shred of his clothing, for purposes best known to themselves, since the latter at least could have been of no use to them. An inborn instinct for pillage and rapine, however, causes men to do strange things.

I need not describe his mother's terrible grief;

words are poor things at best, in such circumstances. The poor soul's husband was at the front, somewhere on the other side of Compiègne and Soissons, and the boy had been tremendously eager to go off and find his father. He had many a time expressed this intention, and his mother had begged him not to try, but he kept on repeating that he wanted to go off and get news from his father.

On the next morning I went over to Chantilly with Freddie, whose mother had finally succumbed to his repeated requests, allowing him at last to start off with me again. To tell the truth the boy's spirit is perhaps even more venturesome than mine. He was strongly affected in the presence of frightful sights or terrible and imminent danger, but his ambition to fare afield and investigate was as great as ever as soon as the peril had passed.

We took a little lunch with us and went as far as Chamont. Passing through the wreckage of this place we looked over the fields on either side of the road, not daring, however, to venture out into the woods. All the cultivated land, that had been giving promise of fine crops of grains and vegetables, was utterly ploughed up by shell-fire. Everything growing in them had been absolutely destroyed. The fine great trees of the woods and copses were torn down in swaths, mown down by the terrific storm of steel, or stood up with shattered limbs and leafless branches.

By the roadside and among the fields the heavily-laden fruit trees had for the greater part been blown to pieces, and were destined never to bear again.

Riding bicycles along this road began to prove a rather dangerous amusement, since the highway was also everywhere torn up into great shell-holes and mounds of stones and dirt. As a matter of fact we had our tires punctured twice and had to stop in order to repair them, causing us considerable delay. In the fields of battle we collected a few weapons and other things to bring home with us. Indeed it was no trouble to find such things, for they strewed the fields and roads. Many parties of French soldiers were hard at work, burying what seemed like innumerable dead. The casualties must have been small on our side in this battle, for there were very few French uniforms among the bodies. The vast majority were Germans. It may be, however, that the poor "poilus" had been accorded burial first. Still, the soldiers, when we spoke to them, confirmed our impression.

Not far from the Grand Château we saw about fifteen British soldiers who had been killed and were being buried in the grounds at the upper end of the château.

We continued on our journey, passing to the right of Senlis, where the military barracks formerly were. Hardly a trace of them was left, for they had been blown into atoms, together with ten or fifteen adjoin-

ing houses. This part of the town had been subjected to the first and most violent bombardment, as the Germans thought that troops might be there. About the place some splendid old trees had been cut down, for all the world as if they had been felled with axes, but for the frightful splintering of the trunks.

After we had looked over these places we went across some fields to a place where there had formerly been a large farm house. It was a terrible picture of destruction, and the bodies of Germans were lying in heaps around it.

We had known the place very well, and picked up a few flowers that had escaped destruction, to take home. There was no great difficulty in doing this, with the exception that many times we were compelled to dismount and carry our wheels, as there was a great number of dead horses lying on the road. These animals had belonged to the German cavalry and artillery.

This time we had incurred no particular danger and Freddie had no tale of personal danger with which to harrow his mother's feelings, most fortunately. She told me at once that they had been inquiring for me from Chantilly and from the Mairie at Gouvieux. I was desired to ride over to Paris on the next day, in order to take letters and messages and bring back such mail as there might be for our villages. I had not made this trip for

several days owing to the battle that had been raging at Chamont.

By this time we knew that the journey would provide us with no especial excitement, in all probabilities, the Germans having been pushed back and the few stragglers being more desirous of surrendering than of making further trouble, saving for a little stray pillaging and a bit of murdering here and there. Nothing, I have concluded, can afford more consolation and comfort to a Hun suffering from home-sickness. It is probable that the corpses of women and children turn his longing thoughts to his beloved ones at home.

The trip was quite uneventful and we reached St. Denis in excellent time. The constant riding had made us into cyclists of sorts, I presume, and the ride was but gentle exercise, at this period. We attended to our usual jobs, saving that we had no longer to convert ourselves into beasts of burden in order to provide the Huns with the wherewithal for smoking. Instead of this we carried back, besides the mail, all the provisions we could pack on our wheels, since nothing whatever in the way of groceries and such things could be found near home.

CHAPTER XIV

MORE "KULTUR"

In the morning we packed up our bundles for the return journey, carrying a voluminous mail and all the provisions we could manage to take along. We had been able to get only about a dozen newspapers and I must say I thanked my stars that they were not of the size my American friends are accustomed to struggle with in the Sunday editions of their favourite journals. Had this been the case we would have been forced to cancel our liberal orders for papers and return empty handed in the way of printed news. In France the dailies commonly consist of a couple of sheets. During the war some have issued but a single one, so that the average American paper looks like some sort of encyclopaedia in comparison.

When we arrived in Lamorlaye we were alarmed to hear that there had been a number of German aeroplanes above our little village. This made me most anxious to get home as soon as possible. We delivered our mail very hurriedly and were soon on our way home, riding as fast as we could so that we reached the house quite exhausted and worn out.

Our people were delighted as usual to see us back, and welcomed my nephew, who had ridden over from Paris with us.

There had been any amount of excitement in Gouvieux, owing to the fact that several bombs had been dropped at one end of our paddocks, close to the church. My wife told us that she had been dreadfully alarmed during the night, as the aeroplanes had passed right over their heads. These particular machines, I afterwards heard, were prevented from going on to Paris by the splendid work of the French aviators and the anti-aircraft guns.

On the day following we decided to go off on a trip as far as Campion in order to see the havoc there. We went first to Senlis, as Bob Peacock, my nephew, was very anxious to see the place and witness the devastation that had occurred there at the hands of the Huns. We had a good look over the place and then went on to Chamont, where we had a short rest, after which we rode off on the road to Campion. We had not gone more than five or six miles when one of our wheels broke down. Fortunately, however, we were able to attend to the necessary repairs ourselves.

As we were working away a man came along, who turned out to be an Englishman who had just ridden over from Campion. He asked if it would be possible for him to obtain something to eat and drink in Senlis, telling us that he had not had a morsel since

leaving the other side of Campion, where he said that a good many of the enemy were still in the neighbourhood. He informed us that he had been hard put to it to make his escape from there. The poor man looked completely tired out and exhausted. I managed to procure a piece of bread and a small bottle of white wine, from a friend of mine in the vicinity, and gave him most of it. He wanted to know whether there was any chance of his being able to get to Paris without riding his bicycle all the way there, and I had to inform him that it was quite out of the question. After reaching Chantilly he could pass through Souville, about fifteen miles further, and perhaps get a train from there. I had heard that they had begun again to run as far as this place. He went along with us as far as Chantilly, but by this time he was so utterly worn out that he could go no further. I went to an old caretaker and explained the case. The Englishman said that he would be only too glad to pay anything if he could secure a place in which to sleep and get a little food. Everything was arranged satisfactorily, the caretaker telling him that he would have to put up with such food as they had been compelled to live on and the stranger was only too glad to avail himself of this offer. He was obliged to remain there for three days, at the expiration of which the trains began to come again, at the rate of only one a day, as far as Chantilly.

Before this man left he exhibited to us three German knives which he had found in a doorway of a house in which several old people had been slaughtered by the Huns. One woman, he told us, had been hung with ropes outside the door, after having been stabbed. These knives had been left sticking in the door. But I cannot attempt to relate a hundredth part of the atrocities that had been committed in his neighbourhood. Again I may say that I wish I could, but these things would not be printed, since there are few people who have the courage and the will to know all of the terrible truth.

We returned to our house, heart-sore and weary, and planned to spend the next day quietly at home. We were being surfeited with frightfulness and glad of a little rest. Besides, there were numberless things requiring my attention at home and any amount of personal business I had been sadly neglecting. The task of straightening things up in the kennels had grown into a huge one, for my poor animals, perforce, had not obtained much of the care they required. Their condition urgently needed my attention.

I worked at this and other things very hard and was busily engaged in finishing up some odds and ends when, to my surprise, an Englishman came to the door, asking if there was any one who could speak English. The sign of "English and American Kennels" over my door had led him to make this enquiry.

As I opened the door I had swiftly noticed that he had a German horse outside, which gave me little inclination to trust him implicitly. It rather looked to me as if he might perhaps be a German trying to parade as an Englishman. But he explained this circumstance satisfactorily, saying that he had ridden this horse for a considerable distance, in the company of a Frenchman, and that he had hurried over to our place for assistance. They had come across six Germans who had entered a house and had attacked the inmates. The Frenchman had gone directly over to the Mairie to report and, returning, stopped at my door for the English soldier. It chanced that two English and two French soldiers who had become separated from their commands and become lost had met on the railroad line. They had travelled along the tracks until at last they reached a freight junction and a bridge which one of the Frenchmen happened to recognize. He told his companions that he knew where he was now. They had climbed up the embankment from which they had reached the main road, over which they hurried to endeavour to join their regiments again. Coming to a small *café* by the roadside which their guide happened to know, they saw outside the place six horses whose trappings showed that they belonged to Uhlans. They crept up to the house, the Englishman hurrying ahead and peeping through the window. He was horrified and hastened back to in-

form his companions of what he had seen. Immediately they had turned the horses loose into the woods. The two French soldiers stood on guard at the front door while one of the Englishmen watched at the window and the remaining one went to the back door, which he pushed in, entering the place. At his appearance the Germans had shouted: "The English!" The soldier rushed at them, felling one of them with the butt of his rifle and attacking the rest of them till four of them were sprawling on the floor. The fifth one had drawn a revolver to shoot him, but the Englishman watching at the window had been too quick for him, firing at once and killing the Hun and the last one remaining on his feet.

The French and English soldiers had entered the *café*, when this battle was over, and shuddered at the terrible sight before their eyes. There was an old grandfather who was pinned with a bayonet to the floor and was still breathing. The old grandmother had been stabbed three times, also with bayonets. Upon the table, bound with ropes that had cut deep into her flesh, the granddaughter had been fastened. The mother had been tied in the same way to a chair, and both these unfortunate creatures had been stripped of their clothing.

The rescuers had lost no time in releasing the poor distracted creatures and then had hurried over to Gouvieux to inform us. We immediately made horses

and carts ready and hastened over to the *café* in order to bring relief to the sufferers and take care of the dead. When we got there the old man had breathed his last. The grandmother expired on the way. The mother and daughter, as soon as it could be managed, were taken over to a hospital where they had to remain for a long time.

These things I have seen with my own eyes, but I know that such unspeakable atrocities were the commonest of occurrences, having taken place all over the invaded countries. I cannot tell my readers, nor will any pen ever attempt to describe, the fiendish cruelty and savagery of the barbarous treatment the Huns everywhere indulged in towards women and young girls. Poor creatures of thirteen and fourteen, often hardly grown out of childhood, were brutally mistreated by the hundreds and hundreds. At first these reports had sounded so horribly that I had refused to believe them, putting down these statements to the excited terror of the refugees. I was soon destined actually to witness such cases so that the truth was absolutely forced upon me until I fully understood the brutish nature of the outrages they committed far and wide. It had been hard to realize that anywhere on earth people lived who could stain their hands with such frightfulness, but it was unfortunately but a short time before no room was left for doubt.

Two or three days later the train service was ex-

tended from Paris to Chantilly, so that I was able to journey to the capital by train and bring letters back and forth with no more trouble. Also I managed to bring a goodly amount of provisions and a little luggage. At about this time the people who had fled from our villages began to return to their homes.

On one occasion I happened to go over to Lamorlaye on my bicycle to have a look at the horses in the paddocks. I met several hundred people who were making their way back to their various homes. They struggled back in a steady stream. As a rule they did not appear to be as sad and depressed as when they had fled before the invasion. As a matter of fact most of them had managed to obtain a better fare than fell to the lot of our remaining villagers, and to live in places where they were sheltered from the constant menace under which we had been existing. Many were desolate enough, however, for some came back to find that their homes were in ruins and their fields devastated.

Getting through to Paris was no very easy matter in those days, the trains travelling very slowly and being badly crowded, especially on the return trip. People had to procure special passes in order to secure transportation but as Freddie and I already possessed them we were not troubled with these formalities. The government had to be very strict in regard to the use of these trains, for there were thousands of eager

people who would have journeyed upon them to satisfy their curiosity, had they been allowed to do so. This would have crowded out many of those who had urgent need to travel over the line, and the authorities acted wisely.

On the following morning Freddie and my nephew and I took another ride as far as Senlis, to see how the returned refugees were faring. No sooner did we reach the town than we became deeply conscious of the frightful misery that existed among them. Women and children and old men were standing among the ruins, some dry-eyed and staring before them as the demented sometimes do, others weeping and bewailing the destruction of all that they had ever possessed. Among them were people so staggered with their losses that they were unable to move, while many others, on the contrary, were earnestly at work digging away at shapeless heaps of ruins, hoping to find some little thing of value, even though ever so slight.

The autumn was at hand, at best a damp and rainy season in the north of France, but in spite of wet and cold these poor people had to sleep out of doors, perhaps sheltered by a bit of wall still standing. A few were lucky to find room in cellars they managed to enter. Indeed they suffered grievously for a long time, until some sort of provision could be made for their accommodation. The supply of food, naturally,

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Nationalité : Anglaise

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SIGNATURE DU TITULAIRE :

Mitchell Frederick

FIRST PAGE OF *CARNET* ISSUED TO FRED MITCHELL BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, GRANTING HIM PERMISSION TO TRAVEL IN THE WAR ZONE

was more than scanty. How most of them did not starve I can hardly explain, saving perhaps by the resourcefulness and courage under hardship that is ingrained in the French people.

When we returned home that evening we were delighted to hear that the French General Staff was expected to come to the Hotel Condé in Chantilly, where it was to make its headquarters. This was a most important matter for us all, for we knew that now we would be entirely protected by the soldiers that would necessarily be attached to the high command in large numbers.

Former residents of Gouvieux, Chantilly and Lamorlaye were beginning to flock back to their homes and we were called upon to do a great deal of work in the way of rendering them assistance in the recovery of all the valuables that had been buried a number of weeks before. They were amazed that these villages had escaped the general destruction, and were inclined to give me perhaps more credit than I deserved in saving them. At any rate it was gratifying indeed to see that they felt so kindly towards me and that I had won their hearts to so great an extent. Practically everything that had been buried was found, and generally in good condition. They had felt certain that these things would be lost, and now it did one's heart good to see how hard they toiled to put things in order and restore former con-

ditions. They constantly kept coming to me and asking me to tell them about my journeys, and how we had fared while the Germans were among us, but I was altogether too busy to tell them much. The trying days through which we had passed were often painful for me to recall, at that time, and I cared little to go over them again and again.

Every minute that I could spare was devoted to looking after my dogs and taking them out for exercise, which they needed ever so badly for many of them were in poor condition through under-feeding and forced neglect. Very soon a number of the valuable horses that had been taken away in the provinces were brought back. Things about us began to resume a more normal appearance and every one looked more hopeful and bright. In the far distance we could still hear the roar of the cannons, so that we were always kept mindful of the fact that the fighting was going on. That was impossible to forget.

CHAPTER XV

A PRISONER AGAIN

We very soon took another trip to Paris, where we indulged ourselves to the extent of going to see moving pictures. Freddie and I returned, loaded as usual with provisions and other things. On our way home the boy began to speak about a beautiful sword that had been brought back from close to the front lines, by a gentleman we had met and who treasured it as a souvenir.

"Dad," he suddenly told me, "why shouldn't we go over in the direction of Compiègne and see if we can't pick up something like that?"

"I'm afraid we might run into danger again," I told him, "and I'm sure your mother won't approve of our going."

"But I would dearly like one of those swords," he persisted.

"We might get one in an unpleasant way," I answered.

"Then you won't go, Dad?" he asked, regretfully.

"I'm afraid it might be too dangerous," I replied.

"But we've been through such a lot of danger together, Dad. Nothing worse can ever happen to us."

"Well, I'll see what your mother says about it," I told him, and tried to change the conversation. This, however, did not quite suit him and he spoke again of how interesting it would be to see the battlefields further away than we had ever been, and of how many beautiful things must be lying there waiting to be picked up.

The more I thought over the matter the more Freddie's idea appealed to me. I was not particularly keen about picking up more Boche trophies, for we already had a good many of them lying about the house, but the prospect of seeing more of the battlefields and of the invaded country appealed to me irresistibly. That evening at supper I told my wife that I was thinking of going in the direction of Compiègne and Soissons to investigate some matters. Freddie immediately jumped at this cue and began begging me to take him and imploring his mother to allow him to go.

She answered that he had roved about the country a good deal during the last couple of months, and told him that he should remain home and look after the dogs. I began to pack up my things and Freddie helped me, looking very gloomy indeed.

I had to go to the Mairie for the passport that was always required for any trip about the country, and

while I was there my wife asked Freddie why he was looking so unhappy.

He replied that it was quite wrong of her to allow me to go by myself, because if anything happened to me no one would ever know anything about it. Her reply, naturally, was to the effect that if something happened to both of us she would be no better informed, but finally, seeing how disappointed the boy was, she told him that he might as well get ready and go.

In the meanwhile, thinking that matters would probably arrange themselves in that way, I procured passports as far as Compiègne for the two of us I was joking a little with the old secretary, and telling him about my son's wish to go.

"I think as he does," said the secretary. "If you had been meant to be killed you would have been done for long ago. Be very careful."

Returning to the house I found Freddie beaming. He had his bicycle ready and his sandwiches and other provisions packed away. We said good-bye to my wife and daughter and started, riding briskly away on a sunshiny cool day. We went through Chantilly to Senlis, where the guard at the bridge, who happened to know me, never looked at our passports but asked us if we were going out to look for more trouble. At this I laughed, little thinking that the trouble was really coming.

We stopped for something to eat at Chamont, after which we rode through a number of villages. Most of these had been blown to pieces, though occasionally a few houses would be standing, on one side or other of the main street. Most of these, however, had been on fire, and invariably the contents had been looted or at least thrown out into the street or yards. Finally we reached the beginning of the large forest of Compiègne. Our way from Chamont had led us through fields that were devastated, while the road had constantly been torn up into shell-holes, compelling us often to jump off our wheels and walk at the side of the highway, or even in the ditches. A great part of the beginning forest was composed of nothing but fire-blackened trees.

At a half-wrecked place that had been a *café* we stopped for water and ate some of the food we had brought with us. It was kept by an old man with a withered arm, who warned us to be very careful as he believed there were a lot of Germans farther on in the woods. As we were talking two men appeared on the road, coming towards us.

"There's a couple of them," the old man called to me.

But on looking more carefully I discovered that they were two English soldiers who had lost their way and were wandering about, trying to discover some one who could understand and direct them.

Their feet were so dreadfully blistered and sore that they were walking barefooted. They carried their coats and shoes and stockings on their arms and walked at the side of the road, where occasional patches of grass gave them easier footing.

Thinking that again they would not be understood, they made signs that they wanted water to drink.

"Are you English?" I asked.

The expression of their sun-browned faces, caked with dust and worn with suffering, changed at once. They were so happy to be addressed in their own tongue that they could only stammer that they were, at first. As soon as I explained to the old man that they were English he leaped towards them and actually kissed their hands.

"Ces braves Anglais!" he cried, running back into the house and bringing out food and some wonderful brand of beer which he said he had made himself.

The poor lads fell hungrily upon this food. They had been lost in the forest for three days and nights, making every effort to find their way back towards their commands. As soon as they had eaten the old man went and got them water so that they might wash their feet and told them that they must remain in the house with him until they could walk again without pain.

During a night attack, they told me, they had been

cut off by the enemy, who had killed two other English soldiers who had been with them. They had remained in hiding in the forest for a long time, till they thought it safe to try to return within their own lines. But they had become utterly lost and had a terrible time until we saw them.

We had to go on and therefore bade them good-bye and good luck, glad indeed that the poor chaps had found a refuge where they would be well taken care of. We went straight on and passed through the little town of Compiègne. There seemed to have been no incendiarism there, the only damage in the pretty old town being due to huge long distance shells that had exploded in some of the streets and buildings. We rode out of the town, finding the roads terribly torn up and went on for perhaps ten miles, till we reached the village of Mercin where we had some mineral water to drink. An old woman told us that we should turn back, saying that there were Prussians not far off. I told Freddie that it was more than time for us to return but he begged to go on a little further, probably eager to keep an eye open for lost swords or other weapons. We went on for about a couple of miles, coming to a little growth of dark firs. Suddenly the harsh order to halt, which we had been so accustomed to but a few weeks before, sounded loudly and most unpleasantly in our ears. Eight of the Huns, armed with guns and revolvers, asked us where

we were going. We answered that we had meant to go but a very little farther and then return to Compiègne.

I felt that we were in a terrible predicament. These men were snarling and swearing at us furiously. Hatred, desire for revenge, the beastly bloodlust of brutes to whom killing has become an outlet for all their passions, were clearly depicted on their faces and in their manner.

"Yes, you shall certainly go farther on," one of them roared out.

They ordered us to follow them. One showed the way and the others brought up the rear, with guns and pistols threatening. We had to push our bicycles along. This lasted until they had taken us three or four miles away, over the roughest roads. We reached some quarries, near which were seven or eight tents. Our wheels were taken from us and we were ordered to go into one of these tents. Our progress had been frequently accelerated by blows from the butts of their guns, while bayonets were held so close to us that there was no inclination on our part ever to tarry. Once within the tent we were informed that we should have to wait in there until they had gone for an officer, and that we should be shot the moment we stepped out of it.

For two or three hours we remained there, soldiers at times putting their heads in to look at us and call

us pigs or any other insulting name they could think of, and shaking their fists at us.

Things looked so very black that, very naturally, I decided that I would probably be killed. Thinking they might possibly spare my boy a little longer, I urged him, speaking very low or whispering, to pay no attention whatever to me. I made him promise that if he could see a chance to save himself he would seize it immediately. Knowing that he would probably be taken off and questioned apart from me I told him that we must relate all that we had done for the Germans in Gouvieux; how we had brought them tobacco and cigarettes and newspapers, and how we had mailed letters for them.

After a long wait a man came, probably a sergeant, as far as I could make out from his uniform. He was as rough and uncouth as the others, and told us that we should have to remain all night in the tent as the officer who was to question us would not be there before morning.

After he had left us to our own uncomfortable devices we were thrown a couple of pieces of bread. It had probably been made over a ramrod or bayonet by running the latter into a lump of dough and holding it over the fire. At any rate there was a long hole in each piece. When we finally broke them the interior seemed to contain a mouldy dust of evil odour. We were also each handed a rusty preserve

tin containing water also highly scented, probably from their former contents that had been allowed to become putrid. Our bicycles, fortunately, had been placed inside the tent, though the valves of the tires had been removed so that the machines could not be used. In our bags we found a small remnant of our lunch, which we ate, for at this time we were utterly unable to stomach the bread we had been thrown.

There was no such thing as sleep for us. We sat close together and I think that my boy managed to have a wink now and then, although he was certainly wakeful most of the time. Often when I thought he slept I found that he was only huddled against me and ready to whisper some of the fears which obsessed him. Mine were bad enough, in all conscience, and my heart bled for the poor lad. Finally the morning broke. We were chilled through, naturally, for we had no covering and upon the ground there was but a thin layer of recently cut grass.

A couple of men came in and took our bicycles out to the entrance of an old quarry and made us follow them there. They made us repair the tires, which had been punctured, and put the valves back in the tires. As soon as this was finished I was taken back to the tent where they placed a chain on my left leg and fastened it to the tent pole.

"We'll show you what we're going to do to all our English prisoners," one of them snarled at me.

"We'll treat them worse than dogs, as they deserve."

He left me there, feeling terribly anxious at being separated from my son. I was brought a piece of the same kind of bread we had received on the previous evening. I thought it would be wise for me to try and eat as much of it as I could, fearing that I would become so weak that I would be unable to stand any exertion or suffering if I became too hungry. It was hard work, however.

During the day I was not much troubled by them, saving for the pleasure they took in throwing an occasional stone or old brickbat at me to see me dodge. I could see that they were anxious that I should get angry. It would have given them the excuse they wanted to really injure or kill me, and I remained silent.

Towards dusk, to my inexpressible relief, Freddie was brought back to me, and I was glad indeed to find that he had not been hurt. They had compelled him to ride his bicycle perhaps one or two hundred yards ahead of a soldier who rode mine, pointing at a spot he must stop at. He obeyed and dismounted, when the soldier overtook him and looked about him, carefully. They then returned. I have no doubt they feared that some of our troops might be near and had sent him first that he might draw their fire. After this they had taken him to another place where

there were some officers and a number of other men. They had questioned him at great length, and had given him a little food rather better than bread. The boy was told that on the following morning he would be taken away.

While he spoke he was much afraid that he would be overheard, and whispered very low. He told me that from what he had been able to make out there was no intention to kill us at once, and that perhaps they might not continue to treat me so badly. We were so exhausted that we managed to sleep a little, that night, in turns. I woke up very often, of course, as did Freddie, and we felt the cold severely.

In the morning they came for us both and took off my chain. I was taken into a quarry and ordered to shovel rubbish, tin-cans, old bottles and broken stone to one side, where they appeared to be about to mount some sort of cannon or machine-gun. Freddie was taken away, with both bicycles. The latter I never saw again. My boy was gone and again I was nearly distracted with fear of whatever might be in store for him.

I was kept working hard until noon, my efforts being encouraged with blows, the throwing of stones and rubbish, and such diversions as pitching shovels and spades at me in order to see me jump. When I was allowed to stop I was given more of that war-bread and some tepid water of undescribable flavour,

in which a few old sausage-skins appeared to be floating. Of this I am not absolutely sure, of course, for the exact nature of these fragments was hard indeed to make out.

My repast was no lengthy one, on this occasion, and I had to resume my labours. Most of the men in the place left, an hour or two later, and I was able to take a little rest, now and then, when the man on guard chanced to be looking the other way. This fellow seemed rather decent; he appeared to see how exhausted I was and, I think, took some slight pains to turn away and give me an occasional chance to breathe. He took me back to the tent, in the evening, and I thanked him. What his nationality was I don't know. He did not appear to be a German. Not a word of French could he speak, nor more than one or two of English. He answered me very gruffly, saying something I could not understand. The chain was again fastened to my leg and I was left tied to my post.

I watched eagerly for Freddie's return, hoping that he would turn up as had occurred before. It grew later and later, and still I kept hoping and listening, until finally the hour was so advanced that I knew it was scarcely possible that they would bring him back. Whether he had been killed or not, of course, I had no means of knowing. There followed a night of suffering, worry and anxiety during which I could

not obtain a moment's rest or surcease. I was beginning to believe that they had made away with the boy and were keeping me alive simply in the hope of extorting information.

CHAPTER XVI

FREE AT LAST

CAME another morning. I was feeling rather more dead than alive, by this time, but I was able to rise from the ground, stiff with cold, when soldiers came in to take off my chain. Bidding me to go with them, they marched me off through woods and quarries for a distance of perhaps five hundred yards to a tumbled down wooden hut that may have served as some sort of shed for the storing away of tools. They had hidden it with cut saplings and branches, so that a very short distance off it was practically invisible. Several officers were about this hovel, and one within it, who began to question me.

He asked me why I had come there, and how many French or British soldiers I had seen on the road. To this I truthfully answered that I had seen none, but he sneered, absolutely disbelieving me. He was to the full as brutal and coarse as his men, in spite of his commanding position. He told me he didn't want any of my lies, and when I answered that I was not lying he took up some heavy object that was on the rough table, and threw it at me with all his strength.

AUTORISATION de CIRCULER

dans le voisinage de la Résidence, si le Titulaire a obtenu le Permis de Séjour dans la Zone des Armées

Le Titulaire qui a obtenu le Permis de Séjour dans la Zone des Armées, est autorisé, porteur du présent Carnet, à circuler, sans autre formalité, aux heures fixées par l'Autorité militaire,

dans la Commune de sa résidence Gouvieux (Oise)

et dans les Communes limitrophes de Chantilly, Lamorlaye, Boran, Precy, St Leu d'Esserent, St Maximin

Au Quartier Général, le 22 Mars 1916.

P. Le Général Commandant,

CACHET

EN CAS DE CHANGEMENT DE RÉSIDENCE

dans la Zone des Armées

I

dans la commune de sa nouvelle résidence .....

et dans les communes limitrophes de (1) .....

Au Quartier Général, le ..... 191 .

Le Général Commandant,

CACHET

(1) L'inscription de ces communes devra être authentiquée par l'apposition du cachet de la Mairie.

FRED MITCHELL'S WAR ZONE PASSPORT

It was done so quickly that in the dim light of the place I could not see what it was. Instinctively I dodged and the thing only glanced from my shoulder.

"We'll make an example of you!" he swore furiously at me. "We'll teach you dirty English to come prying into our affairs!"

To the papers and the Colonel's passport, which I showed him, he paid not the slightest attention, beyond glancing at them. In regard to the latter he sneered again.

"Yes, we've a lot of those half-bred sympathizing Frenchmen among Alsatians and Lorraines," he snarled, referring to the men of the conquered provinces who were forced to serve in the German army.

He ordered the men to take me back and keep me under the strictest guard, without allowing me a moment's liberty. Some things he shouted to them in German, which I was unable to understand. The soldiers marched me back to the tent and fastened me up. Some time later the man who had treated me rather decently in the quarry chanced to put his head in the tent, and I begged him to tell me what had happened to my son. He never answered a word and went on his way, causing my fears to harass me more strongly than ever.

Presently a soldier came, carrying a box in which were pieces of bread. He took one of them and yelled out to me, in broken French:

"Here, you dirty English swine, this is good enough for you!"

With this he spat on the bread and tossed it at me, laughing. Others who were watching, through the open flaps of the tent, joined in his merriment. It was evidently a splendid joke to them.

He went away. By this time I was growing frightfully hungry. Reluctant to touch the filthy morsel. I paid no attention to it for some minutes but finally took courage to pick it up. There was a little water in a can near at hand, and I took some of it in my hand to wash off the bread. It happened that he passed the tent again as I was doing this. He rushed at me furiously and made a stab at me with his bayonet. Fortunately I moved in time, and the point only tore through my clothes and pricked me rather hard on my left side, only tearing the skin.

"I'll teach you to wash your bread!" he roared. "We're not clean enough for you, are we?"

The man finally left and I found myself eating that bread, the most revolting food that had ever passed my lips. As it grew duskier a troop of some thirty or forty men came along, who had not been in this place since my arrival. I heard the word "English" mentioned, and some of them came and peered into the tent. They picked up stones and brickbats and threw them in but, as it was somewhat dark, they did

me little harm. I had taken refuge behind the pole and only one or two struck me.

It had begun to rain a little, and the bitter cold and dampness, as well as my awful anxiety for my son, prevented me from having more than fitful moments of sleep. I did not feel as if I could possibly ever get warm any more. The chill struck through my bones and my teeth chattered.

On the next morning, when it finally came, the men seemed restless and nervous, as if something was impending or they had cause for anxiety. They took more trouble than ever to come close to my tent and keep up a flood of filthy abuse and their bombardment with stones, with which, however, they seldom hit me. I feel thankful to this day that Germans don't practise cricket or baseball. I had during all this time heard the distant roar of the never ending bombardment in the distance, but now it seemed to be coming nearer.

About noon, looking through the open end of the tent, I saw some aeroplanes coming in our direction. The Germans were firing at them rapidly. They appeared to me to be of the British type, though as to this I am not positive. I heard the crashing of exploding bombs and, as I was looking, a terrible explosion occurred in the mouth of the cave I had worked in, about fifty or sixty yards away. When

the dust and dirt and smoke cleared off I could see that the place was a mass of debris. Fragments of rock had flown everywhere, many of them striking my tent. I was lying on my stomach on the ground, thinking that the next bomb might find me out. The machines passed away in the distance. However bad a scare they had given me, they served to keep my tormentors away. The soldiers had disappeared and hidden themselves somewhere or other, and they did not come around until dusk. They threw me another piece of bread.

"That's the last you'll get from us," a man told me. "Tomorrow you'll be put away with a lot more Englishmen."

The wind had risen and seemed to keep the rain off. During the night a regular gale began to blow and I felt colder than ever. The expectation of being executed the next morning was no great comfort. It would end my worries, of course, but the method of so doing hardly appealed to me. I slept as badly as usual, and must have presented a fairly haggard appearance when the morning came. The tent had been nearly blown down. The soldiers appeared to be making ready to leave but one of them rushed over to me.

"You've been trying to pull that tent down!" he shouted.

"No, it's the wind," I sought to explain.

"Don't you answer me!" he yelled with an oath and lifted the butt of his rifle to strike me.

I saw the blow coming and lifted my arm above my head to ward it off. The heavy butt crashed down and I felt the bones of my right forearm splintering. The guy-ropes and central post of the tent had been loosened by the gale to such an extent that my effort to move backward caused my leg that was tied to the post to give this a powerful pull. The heavy post came down, stunning me, and the tent collapsed over me. The man had jumped away, I presume, and I have no doubt that he thought I had been killed.

How long I lay unconscious I have not the slightest idea of. When I finally regained my senses I began to feel a terrible pain in my shattered arm. I rose to a sitting position, holding the injured limb and unable to keep from moaning. I had to ask myself why they didn't kill me outright, for the suffering was unbearable. Looking about me to see where the soldiers were I was surprised to see none of them. They had utterly disappeared. I had no doubt they would return soon and remained as I was, rather wishing that the soldier's threat had been executed. Finally I began to feel that the Huns were perhaps not going to return. If they thought I was dead they would no longer trouble about me, and the idea that I might escape after all struck me all of a heap.

The falling of the pole had uprooted the buried end

of it and I managed to slip the chain over it. No longer was I tied like a dog to its kennel, but I still had to bear the chain as there was no means of unlocking the fastening. The canvas of the tent had been torn in a good many places. Putting down my foot upon a piece of it I managed with my left hand to tear a long strip of it off. Then, resting my injured arm upon a block of stone that had been close by, I managed to bind it around and around, as tightly as I could bear it. The exertion this cost me seemed to exhaust my strength, and I had to lie down for a time, feeling nearly dead to the world. How long this period lasted I don't know. My impression is that perhaps an hour elapsed thus. Presently my heart thumped violently. I heard the voices of Germans, not far away. I jumped to my feet, as best I could. On the ground I saw some pieces of rain-sodden bread which I picked up and put in my left pocket. After this, bending low, I ran towards the quarry. Fifty or sixty yards away from the opening that had been filled in by the explosion of the bomb there was another entrance into which I crept. I found that it was a sort of cave in which mushrooms had formerly been cultivated, as is the frequent custom in that part of the country. I had no doubt that if the men who were coming were my brutish acquaintances they would soon institute a search for me and finish their job. I crept further and further into the cave until

I was in nearly complete darkness, but the dimmest rays of light coming in from the entrance. I felt the side of the cave and came to a place where water trickled down rather fast, so that I determined to remain there so that I should not suffer from thirst. A yard or so further on I found that the ground was fairly dry. The floor of the cave, at this place, was strewn with a great deal of old rubbish. Among other things were some sacks, that had perhaps served to bring in the earth and compost used for growing the mushrooms. Fearing to be discovered I lay down against the wall and pulled a lot of this stuff over myself until I was nearly buried in it.

I lay there for perhaps an hour, hearing vague sounds outside, from time to time. Later on these were more distinct, and several times I saw shadows passing in front of the opening. They were searching for me, I was certain now and my heart beat again fast with the tenseness of my situation. They had searched under the canvas of the tent, not being sure that I had been killed, and when they failed to find me they hastened to hunt for me. It was fortunate for me that they carried no lights, as finally they entered the cave, groping around it, poking in nooks and corners with their guns and bayonets. Finally a couple of them reached within a yard or two of where I was, expecting every moment to be discovered. They felt the rubbish under their feet, and actually

pulled away at some of it and poked into it with their bayonets. I heard some of the old decayed sacking that was over me tearing away, and I held my breath. But the man rose from his crouching position, evidently satisfied that I was not there. Slowly they moved away and I saw them going out through the mouth of the cave, perhaps thirty or forty yards away.

Fortunately for me I did not move, for perhaps a half an hour later they came again. This time, however, they did not search much. I could see that they had brought in something rather bulky, which they laid down on the floor of the cave. Later on they returned for whatever this was. For a few minutes they stood there, talking excitedly among themselves, and finally left for good. After this the passage of time was hardly in my power to estimate. It seemed to me that many hours went by, but I was still afraid to move out of the cave. Finally thirst compelled me to move to where the water was running down the wall. In the hollow of my left hand, used over and over again, I collected enough to slake my thirst. By this time I felt that I was burning with fever. I had to keep on wetting my hand and passing it over my brow and face. In spite of my burning temperature I felt hungry and ate some of the damp bread I had picked up, that must have been plentifully seasoned with dirt. The rats that were scurrying about, constantly, would doubtless gladly have shared my feast.

Later on, when this small provision was exhausted, I groped about for remnants of mushrooms, of which I found a few, since some of them will keep on coming out even upon beds that have been abandoned for some time. I ate these things, hungrily enough, for all their earthy and rather unpleasant taste.

The mouth of the cave grew darker and darker, till finally I could no longer distinguish it, and knew that the night had come. I tried hard to sleep. Nearly always, however, as soon as I lost consciousness I would be awakened again by a terrible pain in my arm. Then the thought of my poor Freddie would return to harrow my feelings and I would picture the misery and anxiety in my home in Gouvieux, till I felt that my mind must give way.

A few times, as I lay awake, I could hear the rats licking up the water, but they did not molest me in any way, nor was I afraid of them, for the dangers I had undergone were too great for me to think of such trivial things as rat-bites.

In the morning I struggled up and shook some of the rubbish off me, taking a long drink. My arm seemed to hurt about as badly as ever, and my fever had left me and given way to a terrible chilliness. I crept to the mouth of the cave, after listening for some time, and looked around, carefully, just putting my head out. Seeing no one I finally stood up. When I looked at myself I was shocked at my condition. My

unshaven face I could not see, of course, but my filthy hands, my clothing utterly hidden by grime, made me feel like the sorriest tramp that ever slept under a hedge.

For a time I sat outside, having seen or heard no one, and wondered whether I had better try to get away from this place, in which nothing but starvation could be looked forward to. After perhaps a half an hour I heard shooting, that seemed to draw nearer and nearer. This led me to get back to my place of concealment. The firing presently, seemed to be taking place very near me. I saw shadows swiftly passing in front of the opening.

Suddenly, as I finally crept back a little nearer, I heard a voice that caused my heart to leap.

"Never mind me, lads, go on and give them hell!"

Yet I dared not go out, as the shooting was still violent and I feared that my sudden appearance might be taken for that of a Hun and greeted by a bullet. But I came nearer the entrance. A few moments later some of the Tommies came in. I stood close to the wall and shouted:

"Don't shoot, lads, I'm English!"

"Here's the boy's father!" yelled one of them.

At this I staggered out, half crazed with joy and yet fearing to hear bad news of Freddie. A number of Germans were lying dead on the ground and, I regret to say, three Englishmen, of whom one was a

captain, so badly wounded that he soon died, and two men less grievously hurt.

One of the men came running to me.

"My God!" he yelled. "Look at what they've done to that boy's poor father!"

Indeed I must have been a sight.

"What do you know about my boy?" I cried. "What's happened to him? Tell me quick!"

They told me that they had seen a boy flying down a road on a bicycle and had stopped him. He had answered them in English. He was terribly excited and could only stammer, they said. His story was that his father had been taken prisoner and was kept separated from him. Then the Germans had sent him again down the road, following him. He had reached a place where there was a cross road. On one side it led down a steep long hill. The soldier following him was some distance away, so he had dashed down, pedalling for dear life, and had kept on going till the English, with some French soldiers among them, had halted him on the road. He carefully described the place where I was being held and gave minute directions in regard to reaching it, telling also all about the Germans there, their number and what they had been doing.

I heard afterwards that a French soldier had handed him a bottle containing some wine and water and that an Englishman had given him a tin of bully-

beef. Then they had told him that they would try to rescue his dad but that he had better go on his way as fast as he could for they expected some fighting at any moment.

The men who found me at the cave were kindness itself. One of them gave me some biscuit and another brought me water. After this they told me to wait a little, questioning me in regard to what I had undergone. Soon afterwards they took me a short distance and showed me a little valley, at the bottom of which I should find a gun-carriage. On reaching this I was to tell the men to take me along with them till they were near the village of Mercin where they would leave me to walk a short distance while they went on to a cantonment whence they were to bring back stretchers and a wagon for the wounded.

I thanked my rescuers how fervently I need not say, and started to the gun-carriage, perhaps a couple of hundred yards away. Two Frenchmen were in charge. Four mules were harnessed to this affair, which started at a good fast trot, one of the men sitting beside me with an arm about my waist, fearing that in my weakened condition I should not be able to hold on. The jolting was fiendish and the torture of it makes me shudder to this day, but we covered the ground fast and, after going some four or five miles, we stopped. I could see the village in a valley below me, perhaps four hundred yards away. I thanked

the men and started down a footpath. In spite of pain and exhaustion I was filled with joy at the idea that my boy was safe. This, I think, gave me greater happiness than anything else I ever experienced, and I managed to walk fairly briskly down to Mercin, holding on to my arm which I had slung in a bit of the chain I still had to bear along, and which I had passed over my shoulder.

CHAPTER XVII

HOME

In Mercin I went up the steps of the Mairie and sat down on the top one, for a moment's rest till the pain that had become so shrewd during my trip on the carriage should quiet down a little.

An old gentleman with a long white beard came out of the building and asked me where I came from and what had happened to me. This I explained, briefly, and he took me across the little square into a sort of *café*. Within it was an old couple. The man went off on some errand but his wife treated me with a kindness I shall never forget. She loosened the band I had tied about my forearm, and exclaimed in horror at the sight of the bones all askew.

"It's broken!" she cried.

The dear old lady went off and got some water, with which she washed my face and hands, as best she could. It was no small undertaking. When this was finished she got some strips of strong cardboard with which she made splints of a sort, wrapping them around with wet paper which she covered over with a bandage torn from an old tablecloth. Her hard and

gnarled fingers were not very skilful, but their tenderness and gentleness with which her poor shaky hands toiled for me was very wonderful. She gave me hot coffee and a bit of black bread, which I devoured thankfully. She insisted on my telling her some of my experiences and her kindness had been such that I could not possibly refuse. In the midst of my tale a young man entered, calling for gasoline but hardly expecting to be able to find any. He was in the uniform of an aviator, all wrapped up in the heaviest clothing, and had just landed in a neighbouring field. His face, I thought, was somewhat familiar.

"Why! Is that you, Mitchell?" he suddenly cried in French.

I recognized him as a former acquaintance in an automobile factory in Paris. To his delighted surprise he was able to obtain the gasoline he needed. The old lady had been volubly explaining to him my troubles and sufferings, and he asked me how I expected to get home.

I answered that the Germans had my bicycle and had naturally confiscated the money in my pockets when they had searched me, so that I supposed there was nothing left for me but walk and beg for food on the way.

"You've flown a number of times, haven't you?" he asked me.

I answered that I had.

"Will you risk it?"

I was only too delighted at that offer. He begged me never to say who had taken me up, since it was strictly forbidden and he would not have thought of doing it if I had not been in such a terrible plight.

His machine was soon supplied with the gasoline he had procured. He strapped me across the thighs and breast, after which he started his motor and climbed in. A few seconds later we were off. I had fervently thanked the dear old lady. Thank Heaven! There were no ruts or rough spots in this ride. He made a few detours around places where we would have been likely to be saluted by German anti-aircraft guns, and in about an hour made a smooth landing on the course in Chantilly known as "Les Aigles." He unstrapped me and helped me out and before a crowd could assemble he was up in the air again and on his way to Paris.

I walked off down the Gouvieux hill, meeting a couple of young stable-boys on bicycles who stopped, astounded, and asked if I was Mr. Mitchell. I confirmed their well-founded suspicion and they said they had heard I was a prisoner, to which I answered that I was one no longer. I was too anxious to go on to stop for any conversation.

The old doctor in Gouvieux had returned there and I immediately went up to his house. His astonish-

ment at seeing me was unbounded. He also thought me a prisoner, or more probably a dead man. I must have looked rather badly for he rushed off for a glass of claret for me. After I had swallowed this he did his best to set the broken bones, causing me indescribable pain, and splinted and bandaged my arm. I was eager to go home at once but he wouldn't hear of it.

"It's going to be a terrible shock to them to see you in this condition," he told me. "Let me send word to them that you are saved, and in the meanwhile you can rest a little and have something to eat with me."

We had something to eat, of which I had stood in great need, and as we were eating he happened to see my daughter passing in front of his house. He left me in the dining room and called out to her that he wanted to see her.

"Have you heard from your father, my child?" asked the good old man.

"No," answered Florence. "Mamma says we shall never see him again."

At this she began to weep and the doctor put his hand on her head.

"I'm sure you will see him again," he assured her. "You will see that he will certainly get back."

"Mamma told Freddie it was his fault that Daddy was dead," she cried again. "He was always wanting father to go off and hunt for relics and see the battle-grounds."

"You're going to see your father very soon," he told her again. "You're going to see him, I give you my word."

"He's been taken a prisoner so often," said the child. "This time they will never let him go."

He told her again that she would see me very soon, in fact, in a minute or two, and gave me a signal to come in. I entered the room. At first she was unable to recognize me, owing to my face that had been unshaven so long, but finally, crying out her joy, she rushed to me and put her arms about me. The child wept and laughed at the same time and her delight showed clearly that all hope of ever seeing me again had been abandoned in my home.

A boy on a bicycle, one of the two I had met on the way to the doctor's, chanced to pass by and the doctor called him.

"Please go over to Mr. Mitchell's house and get Freddie, but say nothing to his mother," the old gentleman asked him.

The lad started in a hurry and rang the bell at my home. My wife answered it and the little chap asked for Freddie.

"What do you want him for?" asked my wife.

"I have a commission for him from Chantilly," answered the lad.

My wife called Freddie and the boy drew him apart.

"The doctor wants you at his house," said the messenger, in a low voice. "I—I think your father has come back."

But my wife overheard a little of this and rushed up to them.

"What is that you said?" she asked, excitedly.

"Well—I—I thought I saw Mr. Mitchell come down in an aeroplane on the Aigles," replied the boy.

"Run quick and see, Freddie!" she exclaimed. "I dreamt last night that I saw your father coming home in an aeroplane."

Freddie came running up just as I came out and stood on the door-sill. He rushed at me and kissed me.

"Dear Dad! How did you ever manage to get away?" he cried.

The boy was beside himself with joy. We walked home and as he jostled me a little Florrie called out to him to be careful on account of my arm, and immediately he questioned me about that, eagerly.

I need say little about my return home. It seemed a place little nearer Heaven than any I had ever entered before, and my wife's joy and emotion I cannot describe.

A cup of tea was brewed for me at once, and between sips I had to tell my experiences. I was ever so anxious to hear Freddie's account of his adventures, but I was not given a chance. My good friends

of the village trooped in, the good *Curé* foremost among them, and almost smothered me in their joy at my return.

"I told them all to have faith," said the priest. "I prayed so hard that you be allowed to come back, and asked the people in church to pray also. I knew we would see you again!"

After they left I had to submit not only to more demonstration of joy and affection but also to a little scolding for my rashness in venturing so far.

It was only in the morning that I was able to go off into the paddocks and hear from Freddie all about his experiences.

"After I left you on the second morning," he told me, "I was watching a chance to escape, since you had begged me to do so if I could manage it. The Germans had another camp some distance away and, in order to go there, they had to pass over an open road. They were afraid to draw the fire of French or English troops that might be about, and didn't want them to know they were there. So I was made to take messages and things back and forth. The French would think I was just some French peasant boy and make sure that everything was all right, since I was not molested. They sent me twice to Mercin to get tobacco for them. The only kind there was was some terrible chewing-tobacco some of the old peasants used. The Germans called it "Kill At Two Hundred

Yards," but were glad enough to have it. I looked at that hill as I went by it, and felt that a fellow ought to go a mile a minute down that steep road. With a good start nothing could catch one on such a grade. I made up my mind that the next chance I had to try it I would just make a dash for it. You can't believe what cowards those Germans are, Dad, when they think that some one may shoot at them. They never dared to show themselves on the open road unless I was ahead of them. If all the men in that army were like that it would be little trouble to lick them.

"So my chance came and I got away. They had told me that if I tried to escape there would be a lot of Germans farther on who would get me and kill me. But it was the only chance there was. They didn't see me turn sharp to one side and fly down that hill. I expected to hear bullets whizzing after me, but they never shot. The fellow who had come behind me had stopped at the side of the road to wait for me. I hope he's waiting yet, Dad.

"And then when I got to the bottom of the hill I was just flying, and a little farther on I heard the order to halt and made up my mind that everything was up with me, and that they would shoot me at once. But when I found that they were English and French I was nearly crazy with joy. So I told them all I knew, and they gave me something to eat and I rode on, fast as I could. So I went on to Compiègne and

rode through it, but it was getting late and there was some people at a little village on the other side. They were awfully good to me, and gave me something to eat and a bed in the house. They woke me up very early, and one of them fixed up my bike and oiled it all ready for me to start, while I was having something to eat. So I thanked them and started off again, riding as fast as I could, and got here early. I was glad enough to escape, of course, Dad, but I felt terrible to think that you were still there, and that perhaps they had killed you.

"You ought to have seen how excited every one was when I got back, Dad. It made them feel that perhaps you would be able to get away too. Of course I had to tell Mamma everything, and how they treated you, and she felt awfully about it and cried, dreadfully."

Thus I heard my plucky boy's tale. Many lads have had strange happenings in this war, and many have indeed lost their lives, but I think I may say that few could have acted with greater courage and with better judgment.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER ALL

After a while the pain began to diminish in my arm, and in good time I could ride a bicycle again, using the one belonging to my wife. The trips I began again to bring back from Paris many necessary things were taken on the train, of course.

A short three miles away from us there was established a hospital in Lies, in a large castle there. The staff of doctors, the nurses, the drivers of ambulances, were all women. The place had been opened by General French's sister, who subsequently went to Salonica where I believe she was seriously wounded.

The ambulances were constantly passing through our village now, and sometimes stopped at our door. The sight of all the poor wounded was a sad one, that we could never get accustomed or callous to. I have seen blood dropping from the automobile ambulances as they passed, and the moans of the wounded were painful indeed to hear.

I was able to undertake some little commissions for this devoted band of workers, in Paris and else-

where, and often had occasion to visit the hospital, where splendid work was being done. When I left they had about eight hundred beds occupied, and I heard that these women surgeons were undertaking and carrying through brilliantly some very wonderful operations. The convalescents were loud in praise of the care and treatment they had received.

The close shave we had on our trip through Compiègne did not altogether cure my boy and myself of the desire to keep on seeing something of the country towards the battle-lines, and it may be that at some further time our further adventures may be told, should they prove of sufficient interest. The cold weather was at hand and our poor people began to suffer severely from the lack of provisions and the scarcity of fuel. A great many of the trees that had been blasted by the artillery fire all through the country were cut up for fire-wood, and helped out the situation to some extent, but, naturally enough, the facilities for transportation were poor indeed. A few of the houses and châteaux had a stock of coal, laid in before the outbreak of the war, but no more could be procured, at any price. Many of the better class of dwellings were tenantless because they had been so looted and bespoiled that, in the absence of available labour, they could not be put in order. The majority of my friends, as well as myself, had no coal whatever on hand, and suffered keenly that winter.

The food question became very acute, for the blowing up of bridges and the destruction of roads caused railroad communications to be kept up with the greatest difficulty. I was fortunate enough to procure a load of coke, which helped us out greatly during the cold weather.

Eventually the General Staff became established in Chantilly, which soon became a busier place than it had ever been in peace times. Soldiers on bicycles, in automobiles, and even in aeroplanes, scurried through, carrying messages and delivering orders. Uniforms of all countries were in evidence. No one was allowed to land in the place without a special passport from Paris, and all arrivals were closely scrutinized.

The Germans, of course, were not long in ignorance of the General Staff's location. Chantilly was in the main line of direct travel from Paris to the east and northeast, and aeroplanes began to come over us very frequently. Aerial combats between the Boches and French and English were sometimes of daily occurrence. Bombing of our villages was industriously kept up and the populations lived with their hearts in their mouths. In the evening the firemen's alarm bell would sometimes toll out a warning. This meant that Zeppelins had been sighted on their baby-killing expeditions. They were not chary of dropping their missiles anywhere, however, and the tolling was a

signal for the people to seek shelter in caves and cellars.

Our lights were ordered to be all out by six o'clock in the evening, and woe-betide the neglectful housewife who failed to obey. Aeroplanes would sight the offending lamp or candle and presently an automobile would come around. Fines and even imprisonment were rigorously imposed.

One evening we were greatly surprised to hear a disturbance at our door. The bell was rung and men rushed in and asked whether we had a light burning. We assured them that we had not, and they searched for a moment. I suggested other places they might look over and advised them to go around at the other side of the church. One of these men was an aviator, and I asked him to come out in my paddocks, where perhaps he could locate somewhat better the position of the lights which he had seen. He followed me there and looked about him.

"I'm afraid I'll have to give up the search tonight," he said, "but I see that I am not on the proper side of the church.

He asked me to walk with him around the church, which I was only too glad to do, and had a long look around. The errand was fruitless, however, and nothing was discovered. For several nights he tried and saw the offending lights again from his plane. The spies at work, however, could see the plane and

watch it come down. This was a signal for them to disappear. At last my acquaintance sent another man to perform the same evolutions and entered a place we had suspected while the machine was yet high up in the air. He found two men at work on a wireless apparatus, who were immediately taken off to Chantilly and there doubtless disposed of according to the laws of warfare.

Such incidents were frequent all over France, as well as in every other allied country. I believe that they have not been unknown in America. Spying, with the Germans, had undoubtedly engaged the services of some of the best brains among them. It doubtless requires no small degree of courage for those who are caught at it generally get a very short shrift. But it is characteristic of the nation that their best men should always be at work, toiling away at all forms of deceit and ever conspiring, during peace-times and in war, to bring about the undoing of other nations. None—absolutely none are safe from them, at any time.

The food question became more and more urgent, and I was having an exceedingly hard time to find enough to keep my poor animals from starving to death. Fortunately, some of the people who had left their pets with me came back for them, so that the number I had to look out for diminished. Strict rationing of the people became the order of the day.

Only so much could be obtained for each person. The secretary at the Mairie told me that I must get rid of most of my dogs, since such animals used food that could serve to keep human beings alive.

I recognized the necessity for such orders, but the command was a heart-breaking one, after the terrible toil I had endured in my effort to save them. Not only were they real friends but they also represented most of my little fortune, which I had invested in the very finest specimens of many breeds, many of them well-known prize-winners. This was a period of black misery for me. Day by day I was compelled to pick out the poor things and chloroform them to death till I had killed some forty of them. It was a task that actually made me shed tears to have to dig trenches and bury them. I went around in the country and in the villages to beg bits of bread that could be spared by the soldiers and others, and bring them back with me to the kennels. Potato-peelings, odd bits of vegetables, bones already picked nearly clean, went into the pots where I tried to make some sort of soup with which I could keep the remainder alive. The largest animals naturally had the largest appetites, so that they were sacrificed first. Finally, having twenty of them left, I went to Garches, near St. Cloud, taking them over in an auto-truck. The place is on the other side of Paris, and a Canadian camp

had been established there. For a time I was able to get a little refuse food from the kitchens of this large cantonment, but after a while even this source of supply failed me, and I had to kill off more of my dogs until but eight were left out of eighty-seven that I had actually owned. These eight were left to be taken care of by some one else, when I came to America. The latest news I have is to the effect that but one of them remains.

Thus I was compelled to kill and inter most of what represented the savings of years. It was probably the hardest and shrewdest blow of all.

I came to the United States with the hope of making arrangement for a series of exhibitions for the benefit of the Red Cross. My plans have met with many unforeseen delays and I have used some of my enforced leisure in bringing together the materials for this book. I said in the beginning that I could not put down one-tenth of the horrors I have seen and experienced. The great majority of the events related here occurred in the presence of a large enough number of witnesses to make it easy for me to corroborate nearly everything that I have put down.

I feel compelled to give a single instance, however, of the hundreds of incidents I have been compelled to keep out of these pages. In a little village some thirty miles away from my home, which was occu-

pied by Germans, a horror stricken man told me to glance into a butcher's shop, without pretending to do so, if I could help it.

The Boches had slaughtered many sheep and had the carcasses hanging up in the shop. Among them I saw a dead naked baby boy depending from one of the meathooks, hanging with his poor little head down.

I am quite sure that the only object of the Huns in doing this was to impress the inhabitants with terror at their savagery—but this is the sort of thing I have seen with my own eyes.

In my time I have ridden some five hundred winning horses and yet have never wagered a penny. I have always been known as a temperate and trustworthy man and I hope to win races again. I cannot afford to have my honesty and integrity doubted. In the tales I have told there is the truth and nothing but the truth, mitigated in most instances so that this should not be deemed a volume of horrors. The people who disbelieve me will be of the kind who refuse to accept evidence of any sort. It is fortunate that they can be but few in numbers.

I met one decent German, and only one, and I hope I have given him proper credit for the propriety of his conduct. But I greatly suspect that there must have been truth in the other officer's statement that he was of Alsatian or Lorraine origin.

It is a new form of warfare that we are beholding now, in which savage brutality has been made the chief element of expected victory. Warriors of benighted countries may slay women and children during raids on an enemy village, but I doubt if they usually put them to the sword after the coveted hovels are conquered. It remained for the Huns to improve not only on the methods of their forebears but also on those of the fiercest tribes of the dark continents.

THE END

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